The Priesthood and Perfection

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Introduction

l. Analysis of modern errors

The dangers of modern times are great, and the remedies to which we often have recourse are insufficient. We shall begin, therefore, by saying a few words about the need for greater faith. The poisonous errors in modern life are tending toward a complete dechristianization of society, a dechristianization which began m the sixteenth century with the rebirth of paganism and the reappearance of pagan pride and sensuality among Christians. This turning from Christ advanced another stage under Protestantism, which rejected the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the value of sacramental absolution and confession, the infallibility of the Church and Tradition, her teaching

power, and finally, the need for observing the precepts which lead to salvation-four denials which strike at the root of the Christian life. Then the French Revolution with its deism and naturalism lent a hand in the dechristianization of society: God, if He exists, is interested only in a universal ordering of things and not in individual people. Sin, therefore, is not an offense against God, but only an offense against reason which is constantly evolving. Stealing, for example, was a sin so i

long as the right of private property was admitted; but if, as communists hold, private property is an injustice against the community, then private property itself becomes a theft.

This spirit of revolution led naturally to liberalism, which tried to steer a middle course between the teaching of the Church and modem errors. But liberalism could reach no definite conclusions: it neither afltrmed nor denied, but always made distinctions; and discussions dragged on because it could not solve difFiculties which were springing from a denial of the principles of Christianity. Tiberalism failed to provide a norm of conduct and it gave way to radicalism, which was even more opposed to the Church. Because it did not like the word "anti-Christian" it called itself " anticlerical." That is typical of freemasonry. But radicalism led to socialism and socialism to atheistic and materialistic communism, as found in Russia today. Attempts were made to spread communism in Spain and other countries also, and to reject religion, private property, the family, the idea of a fatherland, and reduce human life to economics, as if we had no soul, and as if religion, science, art, and rights were the invention of those who wished to keep others in subjection and, in the name of private property, possess everything themselves.

The only effective opponent of materialistic communism is the Catholic Church, because only true Christianity, or Catholicism, contains the truth without any mixture of error.

Nationalism cannot withstand communism. Equally powerless in the religious sphere, because it contains serious error, is Protestantism as practiced in Germany or England;

for error, like a virulent disease which kills a living organism, kills any society built upon it as a foundation. Protestantism is like consumption or cancer; it slowly destroys life, because it denies the sacrifice of the Mass, confession, the infallibility of the Church, and the necessity of keeping the commandments.

2. *Their effects on everyday life*

What effect have all these errors on civil legislation? It gradually becomes atheistic. Not only does it forget the existence of God and divinely revealed law, both positve and natural, but it even enacts legislation opposed to the divine revealed law-laws permitting divorce, for example, and laws establishing neutral schools, which eventually become atheistic in all three divisions: primary, secondary, and university. In these schools religion is often reduced to a more or less rationalistic history of religions in which Christianity wears the garb with which the modernist heresy dressed it, a new though higher product of the evolution of the "religious sense" which changes continually so that no dogma and no law are immutable. Finally there is complete freedom of cults and religions; even impiety and irréligion have their freedom. But the repercussions of these laws on society are immeasurable-laws permitting divorce, for example, which in every nation ruin thousands of families each year and leave children without real education and guidance. And so, year after year, young people who are the country's future citizens leave these atheistic schools without a grasp of any religious principles. Disordered reason, the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, the desire for money and the pride of

life take the place of Christian faith, hope, and charity. All these things form a special naturalistic system under the name of a *lay* or *independent ethic,* without any obligation or sanction. Sometimes, it is true, a small vestige of the ten commandments remains, but a vestige always liable to change.

If the sorrowful effects of these cancerous errors are not evident in the first generation, they will become very obvious-according to the "law of acceleration in fall"in the second, third and fourth generations. This deterioration in succeeding generations is like the quickening speed of falling bodies: if in the first second the rate of fall is 20, in the fifth second it will be 100. But progress in charity is of a completely different kind: it is like that in the parable of the sower, where each seed sometimes produces thirtyfold, sometimes fifty, sometimes a hundredfold.

It is a real dechristianization, an apostasy of nations. The great Catholic Spaniard, Donoso Cortes, gave a brilliant analysis of the errors at the root of this dechristianizatiori in a long letter given to Cardinal Fornari to present to Pius IX, \vho in his own turn noted those errors in his "Syllabus" (cf. Denz. 1701).

At the root of these errors is the idea that God, if He èxists at all, is only interested in universal laws and not in individual people. As a result, sin is not an offense against God, but against a constantly evolving reason. There is no such thing as original sin, a redemptive Incarnation, regenerative grace, sacraments, and sacrifice. The priesthood and prayer are useless.

Indeed, to think that God exists at all is a mistake. If men individually do not need God, why should we suppose
that He exists in heaven? Rather, humanity is evolving itself into god. God is that tendency to progress, to achieve the happiness of all, the happiness of which socialism and communism speak.

How, therefore, according to these principles, can we discern truth from falsehood? There is only one way: liberty of discussion in parliament and elsewhere. This liberty is absolute. It has jurisdiction over everything-the utility of divorce, private property, the family, and the value of religion. And so discussion remains as open as if there never had been a divine revelation : the fact that divorce, for example, is forbidden in the Gospel is of little importance.

All these things cause great disturbances, innumerable injustices and crimes; and the only remedy applied is to increase continually the power of civil magistrates, the police, and the army.

But the police are subject to those in power and often a rival group, with completely opposite ideas, will take over control. Besides, when private property is abolished, patriotism, which is like the soul of an army, generally disappears also.

These remedies, therefore, because they reject the divine law and even the natural law written on man's heart, cannot preserve public order and prevent serious disturbances. This failure is a proof, *per absurdum,* of the existence of God.

In conclusion we may note with Donoso Cortes that those societies which are based on grossly false principles and atheistic legislation are on their way to death. In them, the individual as such can, with God's grace, be saved; but

as societies they are dying because the error upon which they are founded is a deadly one. In a similar way, consumption or cancer progressively and infallibly destroys our human organism. Only the Christian and Catholic faith can resist these errors and rechristianize society, but it can do so only on condition that we have deeper faith. As St. John said: "This is the victory which overcometh the world: our faith" (I John 5:4).

3. Remedies

Two remedies, excellent in themselves, are often proposed : the *apostolate of Catholic Action* and the *study of faith and morals.* Frequently, however, the heart of our study lacks what ancient theologians called "contemplation," which should be the spring of the apostolic life. As St. Thomas says: "teaching and preaching spring from the plenitude of contemplation.'" This was true of the apostles after Pentecost. It was true in the case of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, the Apostolic Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. John of

the Cross, St Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis de Sales, St. John Bosco, St. Joseph Cottolengo, the Curé d'Ars, John Baptist Manzella. Yet we often find priests lacking an interior life sufôciently intense to be the soul of the apostolate.

Catholic Action in Europe and America has done great work in renewing the Christian life among members of the working class in city and country, and among university students. Great progress has been made in Italy, France, Switzerland, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Canada, Mexico, the Argentine and other places. Occasionally, however,

priests engaged in directing Catholic Action are too much absorbed in "bureaucracy," in the organization of external activity and in propaganda, with detriment to their own interior life and the interior life of others under their care. It is with difficulty that they find time to read their breviary even rapidly; sometimes, also, a too great familiarity with young people of both sexes lessens their dignity and power to do good. Often, too, the better educated among the laity become quasi-preachers. In this there are two great dangers: religious sentimentality and humanitarianism. Often the lecturer, or quasi-preacher, does not live sufficiently from deep faith and apostolic charity. We can speak vividly and eloquently only of those truths which we fully live. If wc have not, therefore, a deep faith and a true apostolic charity, our words will spring merely from religious sentiment and humanitarianism, whose formal object is very different from that of true apostolic charity. If the preacher or lecturer who does not live very close to God speaks, for example, from democratic aspirations, he says that he is speaking about a Christian democracy; but he should take care that it is truly Christian. Otherwise, as sometimes happens, the motive of his work will not be supernatural but natural, and will be robbed of its efficacy.

Freemasons make use of this deviation so that apostolic work in the Church may become a practical naturalism which is a denial, at least in practice, of the supernatural life. In the apostolate there is often lacking that interior life which ought to be the very sou] of the apostolate.

Another excellent remedy which has been used is the study of faith and morals. In our day, it is true, there is increased interest in philosophy, exegesis, theology, sociol-

ogy, and even ascetical and mystical theology. At times these studies are made in a more scientific way than formerly, and they are carefully distinguished from "pious exhortations" which lack any solid doctrinal basis.

But a "distinction" should not be a "separation." Too often study is unfortunately separated from the interior life, so much so that it is not inspired by our interior life nor does it aim sufficiently at fostering it. The interior life is neglected and so we study in a purely natural way, without a spirit of faith, with the result that our interior life gradually grows dim. In ascetical and mystical theology, theses dealing with the spiritual life are expounded and defended, but this study is not directed primarily to the actual work of sanctification and consequently has little effect. It would be much better ;.o live a life of prayer than to write a tract on it! Many people criticize spiritual books unjustly. They say that they are either scientific works or vulgarizations. But the New Testament and the work of the great spiritual writers are neither scientific in the technical sense nor vulgarizations: they are the fruit of contemplation.

Hence the remedies which have been applied to the evils of modern life, although excellent in themselves, have not been properly used and produce little fruit. We fail to rise again to higher things. We realize this, but in order to escape from a feeling of sadness about it we take refuge in a superficial optimism, which is either the effect of our temperament or else is deliberately willed. But this superficial optimism is not strong enough to prevent a weakening of our spiritual life.

And thus not only is no remedy applied to our ills but

a peace is pursued which is not the peace of God-not joy in God, but rather a joy without any foundation, a joy often fatuous and insipid.

It follows, therefore, that the interior life is absolutely necessary for the priest and the apostle if he is to develop a deep faith, a faith which will radiate and communicate itself to all so that all may resist the deadly poison of modern errors. And so we come back to the definition of the apostolic life given by St. Thomas Aquinas: "to contemplate divine things and to give to others the fruit of our contemplation." "]ust as it is a greater thing to illuminate others than merely to shine, so it is a greater thing to communicate one's contemplation to others than merely to contemplate. [And this form of life] most resembles the perfection of bishops who are the successors of the Apostles." z In the same context, St. Thomas says that the preaching of the word of God should proceed from the fullness of contemplation, From a deep interior life.

It follows, therefore, that the sanctification of the priest is of primary importance, far more necessary than the "natural development of our personality." This latter expression is naturalistic and could be used even by an unbeliever or an atheist. It springs from a forgetfulness of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, *H allowed be thy* izame, a petition that God's name may be glorified, that it may be accepted as holy by every creature.3

It follows also that a priest should celebrate with very great care the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and so join his daily persona] sacrifice to the great sacrifice of Christ,

renewed in an unbloody manner-doing this in a spirit of réparation and mortification, in spite of the stress laid on personal comfort in modern times.

It follows, also, that there is a need for intimate prayer, without which it is impossible to have a spirit of prayer. When this spirit of prayer is absent, liturgical prayer sometimes degenerates into religious aestheticism. St. Bernard once had a vision which brought this point clearly home to him. He was in choir one day presiding over the Divine Office and he saw over the head of one of the monks his angel guardian writing the psalmody in letters of gold; over another, an angel wrote in letters of silver; over a third in letters of lead; over a fourth in colorless water. But over a fifth religious, his angel guardian stood hand poised and pen extended, not writing a word, to indicate that this religious was not praying at all, that lie had not any spirit of prayer.

Examination of one's conscience is also very necessary, even though in some seminaries the retreat-master has been asked not to speak of "examination of conscience" but rather of "introspection." Others refer to it as "psychoanalysis." This is clearly a déviation from the proper supernatural spirit to practical naturalism. An examination of one's conscience ought to proceed from infused prudence, illuminated by faith and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, whereas both introspection and psychoanalysis are something natural. This change of phraseology reveals a change from a true supernatural life to a mind and heart imbued with practical naturalism.

If these higher and true remedies are neglected, the priest will have merely a superficial faith which touches only the

fringe of Sacred Scripture, not a deep, radiating faith. Such a priest may speak of the need of dynamism in the apostolate, but this dynamism seems to be mainly natural and it differs very much from the apostolic spirit of St. Peter at Pentecost, or that of St. Paul or St. John Chrysostom or St. Augustine or St. Bernard or St. Dominic or the Curé d'Ars or St. John Bosco.

This point was stressed by Pius XI in his encyclical, *A d catholici sacerdotii* (Dec. 20, 1935), in that section where he discussed the virtues, and in particular the piety, of a priest.

Clearly, it is not enough that the priest should be a man of keen intelligence, wide culture and éloquence. Even if he has these gifts his life may, as happened in the case of Lamennais and Loisy, be unfruitful. Here the priest does not seek God or the salvation of souls, but he seeks himself, his own natural satisfaction in intellectual work and in that natural activity which is not sanctified because it does not proceed from an interior life of faith, hope, charity, and prayer. It does not produce, therefore, a supernatural effect, the salvation of souls.

On the other hand, the apostolic work of a priest who has little natural intelligence but a great supernatural faith, a true interior life and réal piety, will be very fruitful. This apostolate, modest

though it be in outward form, will bear much fruit, and without any appeal to "dynamism" will save many souls. At the moment of his death such a priest will be judged by the love which he bas for God and for souls, his forgetfulness of himself and his self-abnegation.

\X hen one follows this traditional way of priestly formation, the virtue of faith is deepened, even without any help

from lofty theological speculation or the knowledge of Oriental tongues. Such a faith, already ftrm and living, becomes deeper every day, because its intensity is deepened with the deepening of charity, and it is illuminated by the gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, and piety. As a result, it diffuses itself, touches the hearts of sinners and converts them. It shows itself as a higher sense, a Christian sense, and it is as far superior to the natural sense as infused faith, illuminated by charity, is superior to natural reason. A saintly parish priest, the Curé d'Ars, had this Christian sense in a very high degree.'

If through the recitation of the Divine Office and the celebration of Mass and meditation, the prayer of a priest does not develop into a true spirit of prayer and reach its normal goal-the contemplation of divine things, which is the soul of the apostolate-it will degenerate into a mere mechanical routine, and the recitation of the breviary will be like scanning the morning headlines.

5. *Recapitulation*

The milieu in which we live demands a moral and spiritual revival, a realization and an acknowledgment of our dependence on God. A positive approach is the means best fitted for accomplishing such a reform, an approach whereby we lift our hearts and minds to God and ask His grace to obey His command that we love Him above all things and love our neighbors as ourselves.

As a practical conclusion, we may use those words of St. Augustine quoted by the Council of Trent: "God does not order you to do impossible things. But when He does command you, He admonishes you to do what you can

and to ask for help in what is outside your power, and He helps you so that it may be within your power." 5 New graces, therefore, are continually being offered to souls, particularly to priests, in this crisis of modem life, so that they may now carry out their obligations completely.

Many even feel that God is preparing exceptionally great graces for priests so that they may possess that faith of which we spoke-not merely a strong and living faith, but a profound, penetrating, discerning and radiating faith. They must communicate this to the Christian world so that it may be able to resist modern errors-a deadly poisonand find once more that pure air of the Christian ages. That would be the verification of St. John's words (I John 5:4) *This is the victory which overcometh the Iworld: ourfaith.* We may conclude by noting that theological study and the interior life should be *united;* we must, indeed, make a distinction between the two, but we must never separate them or confuse one with the other. Otherwise theological science, through a confusion with piety, would]ose its objectivity and immutability, and the interior life might perhaps be reduced to the theses on spirituality. Sacred theology would thus unhappily be reduced, as the Modernists reduced it, to an intellectual expression of subjective religious experience. On the other hand, our interior life would become too intellectual; it would become a theory of the interior life and would]ose its realism, its serious depth and fecundity.

These two must not be separated, but distinguished and united, just as they were in the lives of St. Augustine and St. Thomas and all the Doctors of the Church. Body and sou], the head and the heart, blood and the veins are dis-

tinguished and yet united as are Church and State, or the various classes in society, or parents and children in the family.

If in our organism that distinction becomes a separation, death will follow. If that separation is allowed in society it too will die. It is the same with our life which must be both spiritual and intellectual. We should ask for this great grace-the union of our study and our piety-through the

intercession of the Doctors of the Church who must first be canonized for their sanctity before they can be given the title of Doctor because of their knowledge.0

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, 2-2, q. 188,* a. 6. This work will henceforth be abbreviated *S.T.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.,* q. *83,* a. 9.
4. See H. M. Cormier, O.P., *Rétraite ecclesiastique;* modèles: S. Vincent de Paul, S. Phillippe de Néri, S. François de Sales. 5. Denzmger, *E nchiridion Symbolorum, 804.*
6. On this question see the life of St. Alphonsus by Father Bréthe, as it contains two chapters of great importance.

CHAPTER 1

Interior Life and Infused Faith

AU theologians admit that the knowledge which we have by Christian faith, in spite of its obscurity, is absolutely certain. But they do not agree in the way in which they explain this certainty. For several centuries there have been two main schools of thought. One school teaches that the formal motive of faith is not itself known by faith; die other teaches that this formal motive is known by faith.

In the fcrst school of thought are the Nominalists, Durandus, Gabriel Biel, Scotus, Molina, Ripalda, Lugo, Franzelin, Billot, Bainvel, van Noort and Harent. These authors teach that the infallible motive of faith (i.e., the authority of God revealing and the revelation itself) is an object of natural knowledge, because through natural knowledge we know that God can neither deceive nor be deceived, and through certain signs-miracles, in particular -we know the f act that He has actually spoken.

CRITICISM: One obvious difficulty may be raised against this position. The certainty of infused faith is quite definitely based materially and extrinsically on the rational knowledge of the "signs" of revelation. Formally and intrinsically, however, it is based on something higher. If this 15

were not so, it would mean that a higher certitude would be based on a lower one. Moreover, very few of those who believe have actually seen miracles with their own eyes. \ en few have been able to examine them sufficiently well to judge their supernatural origin. Normally, therefore, those who believe have, in the natural order, only moral certainty of the "signs" of Christian revelation, a certainty which depends on human testimony, known only in an uncritical way.

If, therefore, as many other theologians point out, the certainty of Christian faith is based ultimately on this moral certainty of the "fact" of revelation, confirmed by various "signs," it would only be firm and infallible hypothetically, i.e., on the supposition that one is certain for some other reason that God has revealed the Trinity, the Incarnation and Redemption, and the infallibility of the Church when it proposes these mysteries to our belief. One should have to presume, in other words, that the preaching of these mysteries is not due to the *natural* evolution of the religious sense in the subconsciousness of the prophets and Christ. This is what the Modernists held. For them, faith was an accumulation of probabilities.

A *second theory* is defended by Thomists and, to some extent, by Suarez. They teach that by infused Eaith the believer *in f allibly and supematurally* knows the formal motive of faith as *that by which one believes and that which is believed (id quo et quod creditur).* This act of knowledge

is not discursive, but simple and firm, surpassing by Far the knowledge, which is at least morally certain from apologetics, that the mysteries of faith are clearly credible-the "fact" of revelation, in other words, confirmed by definite signs.

In my book *De Revelatione* (t.I, c. xiv, pp. 467-497), I have cited many texts from St. Thomas and from both early and modern Thomists to support the second theory. This second theory is based on three arguments:

(1) the absolute infallibility of faith; (2) the essentially supernatural nature of the motive of faith; and (3) the supernatural nature of faith itself.

1. A bllolute infallibility off aith

The fact that there has been a revelation is proposed to us with *moral certainty* by history, which tells us of the preaching and miracles of Christ. But it is also *infallibly* proposed to us by the Church, which defines that this revelation is strictly supernatural and has not evolved from the subconscience of prophets. What is taught infallibly by the Church, however, must be accepted by all on supernatural faith. It follows therefore that those who believe must accept on *supernatural* faith the fact of revelation as well as the mysteries revealed. St. Thomas says: "By one and the same act we believe God revealing and God revealed *(uno et eodem actu credimus Deo et Deum).'" And* infused faith so perfects the intellect, says St. Thomas, "that the intellect infallibly moves toward its object." 2

If the formal object of faith were only naturally known by human testimony, the certainty of faith would not be absolutely, but hypothetically infallible. The words of St. Paul would not, therefore, be infallibly true: "When you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you

received it not as the word of men. but (as it is indeed) the word of God who worketh in you that have believed" (I Thess. 2:13).

2. E ssentially supernatural nature of the motive offaith

Truth and *being* are convertible, for truth is *being* as it is known by the intellect. Consequently, whatever is essentially supernatural cannot, formally as such, be known in a natural way. But the formal motive of faith is essentially supernatural, because it is the authority of God the Author of grace and glory, the authority of God revealing mysteries essentially supernatural. This formal motive of faith is supernatural to an even greater extent than a miracle. He who reveals is God, not as Author and Ruler of nature, but precisely as Author of grace and our Father in Heaven. That is why Christ says: "I confess to thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11:25). He says also: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

The formal motive of infused Faith, like that of infused hope and charity, is inaccessible without grace. Otherwise it would not be necessary to have these infused virtues at all.'

3. E ssentially supernatural nature offaith itsel f

Revelation teaches us that faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8), the "substance of things to be hoped for" (Hebr. 11:1). a supernatural virtue (Vatican Council, Denz. 1789). But habit and act are specified by both formal objects, quo and quod, of the same order. Therefore the formal object quo, or the formal motive by *which* infused faith is specified, must be of the same order as faith, and cannot, therefore, be known without faith. Otherwise, infused faith would not be absolutely indispensible in order to believe in the way necessary for salvation. It would be indispensible only in order to believe more easily and more firmly, as the Pelagians taught. Similarly, infused hope and infused charity, or the state of grace, would be necessary merely in order to perform acts of these supernatural virtues with greater ease.

Thus, as St. Thomas says, in one and the same act of faith we believe God revealing *(Deo)* and God revealed *(Deum).* ' Faith is thus more certain than every natural knowledge; its infallible certainty

is vastly superior to that which people normally reach after a careful examination of apologetical writings.

Fr. Lacordaire expressed very well the supematuralness and infallibility of faith: "There is the learned man who studies Catholic teaching and who says continually: You are lucky to have the faith; I would like to have it as you have it, but I am unable.' He is right; he is not yet able . . . but one day this learned man kneels down, becomes conscious of man's misery, raises his hands to heaven and says: From the depths of my misery, O my God, I cry to you.' At that moment something happens to him. the scales fall from his eyes, a mystery is accomplished in him, and behold, a change! He is a man gentle and humble of heart: he can die now, he has reached the truth. (A mystery is accomplished in him; the infused light of faith has

been given to him.) A sympathetic intuition between two men can accomplish what logic could not do in many years. Occasionally, even a sudden illumination can enlighten the spirit. A convert will tell you: 'I have read, I have reasoned, I have willed, but I could not accept it; and one day, without knowing why, at the corner of a street, beside my hearth, I changed, I believed . . . and what took place within me at the moment of my final conversion is absolutely different from what preceded it, ... You remember the two disciples who were going to Emmaus.""

Infused faith, thereFore, is like a higher spiritual sense, like an infused sense of music which makes one hear the heavenly harmony of divine revelation. And so, in truth, "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (Hebr. 11:1). In this way we see how its firm certainty, which excludes every deliberate doubt, is, in spite of its obscurity, far above that moral certainty which one normally gains from a study of apologetics.

From this it follows that the loss of infused faith is the cause of very great unhappiness. Faith, however, is lost only by a mortal sin directly contrary to faith itself. A sin against the external profession of one's faith-Peter's sin, for example, during the passion of our divine Lordwould not be sufficient.

Even in the state of mortal sin this faith remains very firm, but in that case it is called in f ormis or *dead-i.e.,* not enlivened by charity. Thus, for example, works of mercy performed in that dead state are called "dead works." When faith is informed by charity it is called a living faith, and when it is perfected by the inspiration of the
gifts of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, it is called faith illuminated by the gifts, a faith which is penetrating and discerning, the contemplation of things divine.

We find a confirmation of this doctrine in the passive purification of the spirit, in which we see the profundity of the formal motives of faith, hope, and charity, in that these motives are so infinitely above every other secondary motive, such as the harmony of supernatural mysteries with natural truth and the aspirations of man's heart. This harmony is no longer apparent; it is hidden in a mist, and the motives of the three theological virtues appear as three great stars in the night of the spirit. It would not be of much use then to read a good book of apologetics; but one has to pray to obtain the actual grace needed amid the vehement temptations of this passive purification for an acceptance which is very firm and very meritorious. The soul finds at last its immutable refuge in the authority of God who reveals.

We have said enough of the supernaturalness and infallible certainty of infused faith. Now we shall speak of the spirit of faith or the supernatural spirit.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

I.S.T., 2-2, q. 2, a. 2.

2. *Ibid.,* q. 4, a. 5; see q. 4, a. 8. 3. See *Ibid.,* q. 6, a. I.
4. *Ibid.,* q. *2,* a. *2;* see q. 4, a. 8.

5. Jean Baptiste Lacordaire, *l 7e Confèrenee de Notre Dame.*

CHAPTER 2

The Spirit of Faith and Signs of Its Presence

A spirit of faith is that inclination to consider and judge reality in a supernatural way under the light of faith. This is necessary if we are to live in a Chnsthke manner, exactly in the same way as it is necessary to judge according to a properly adjusted reason if one is to live a reasonable life and not a life governed completely by the sensual side of our nature.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul gives us very beautiful examples of this spirit of faith: "By faith, Abraham . . . offered Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son . . . Accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead.. . . By faith, [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the fierceness of the king: for he endured, as seeing him that is invisible. . . . By faith, [the Israelites] passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land: which the Egyptians attempting, were swalloiwed up. By faith, the prophets conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword.. . . They were stoned, they were cast asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword. ...

Of whom the world was not worthy" (11:17ff). All these died in faith and yet they had not seen the promised Christ. What should we, who have lived after Christ, establish as our goal? "Laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebr. 12:1-2).

In order to live in a spirit of faith, everything and everybody, God, ourselves, our neighbor, the ordinary details of our daily life, must be viewed, as St. Thomas says, "with the eye of God."

1. God considered in a spirit of faith

Otherwise we shall see God not as He really is, but in the light of our own disordered passions and prejudices. If that is the case, we shall not be listening to God in our prayers, but to ourselves. We shall imagine that sensible consolation is a sign of progress and that a period of sensible aridity is an indication that we have fallen back. This will give rise to a completely false idea of God.

If, on the contrary, we look on God in a spirit of faith, we shall not see Him in the light of our own disordered passions, but *mirrored,* rather, *in the mysteries of the life and death of our divine Lord,* in the victory which the crucified Christ won over the devil, over sin, over death; we shall see Him mirrored in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the wonderful life of the Church, in the communion of saints-the Church militant, suffering and triumphant.

But if we are tn reach that vision, we must cut away from the eye of faith that covering of self-love which prevents the contemplation of divine things. When the eye is veiled, only the shadows of the mysteries and their difficulties are seen. This shows how necessary it is to mortify our personal judgment and our personal will-that is, a will which is not in harmony with the divine will, a will which obscures many things in our mind: for we judge as our inclinations lead us to judge. By this progressive purification, we shall gain a deeper vision of the sublimity of God, His goodness, the very tender mercy of Christ, the beauty of the Church and religious life.

2. Considering ourselves in a spirit of faith

If we view ourselves only by the light of natural reason, we shall see our natural qualities only and exaggerate and enlarge them. Then, inevitably, when we realize the limitations of these qualities, we shall become timid and depressed. This fluctuation of feeling is very common.

Rarely, however, do we consider the wonderful supernatural treasure which we carry within us- the life of grace, the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of Holy Communion, the greatness of our vocation in which al] the actual graces that we need to climb to the heights of perfection are offered to us. We should ask God to give us that realization of the meaning of our priestly vocation which we shall have immediately after death at the moment of our particular judgment.

If we view our soul by the light of faith, we shall gradually come to see our predominant failing, our lack of a supernatural spirit, our levity of mind, and that vanity

which makes us speak and judge in a purely human way. Thus we shall see clearly what bas come from God and what bas come from our own weakness; we shall be able to distinguish the light from the shadows.

3. *Considering our neighbor in a spirit off aith*

Often we consider him only by the light of a natural reason blinded by our prejudices, pride, ambition, jealousy. We approve in him whatever is pleasing to us, whatever is useful, whatever is due to us from him; and we disapprove in him whatever is displeasing to us. Occasionally we disapprove those things in which he shows himself superior to us. And then our self-love prompts us to belittle him and make rash judgments about him.

On the other hand, if we consider our neighbor in the light of faith we shall see in him what bas come from God. The authority of a superior, for example, will be the authority of God which we should obey without criticism or discussion, promptly, and with our whole heart. Similarly, we shall see in those people who are naturally displeasing to *US souls redeemed* by Christ and nearer, perhaps, to the heart of Christ than we are ourselves. Then our supernatural vision will penetrate beneath the covering of flesh and blood which hides the soul from our view. Then we shall realize that two immortal souls are never associated by accident, that one at least, by giving example, should be a spiritual advantage to the other. We should ask God that we may recognize good and saintly people- those, particularly, with whom we live and whom we often ignore.

If we consider those naturally pleasing to us in the light

of faith, we shall see their supernatural virtues, and this will raise our affection for them to a higher plane. We shall also see defects, which, perhaps, we can charitably bring to their notice so that they may reach even greater perfection.

4. *L ife's events considered in a spirit off* aith

Each day's events should be considered in the light of faith, both those that bring us joy and those that cause us sorrow. Every event of life can be examined in three basic ways: (1) materially; (2) rationally; and (3) supernaturally. The first is the crudest. The second is that followed by those whose intellects lack the gift of faith. The third is fitting for Christians. Fundamental to it is this question: Does a particular event contribute to or work against the glory of God and the salvation of souls?

It is under this last aspect that we should look on war, civil strife, and divisions among Catholics, so that they may not grow greater. But in order to see this supernatural aspect of things, or to see how God's providence is working in them, a Christian man must live in God and must not be ruled by considerations lower than God. It is even good, if a man is to be free from too great a love for things of a lower order, that he should sometimes be deprived-or even despoiled-of them : "If we are to see the stars, the sun must not be shining." Similarly, a Christian king who bas lost his kingdom-Louis XVI of France, for example, before his death-will have a better vision of the *k ingdom* o *f* God than he had while on his throne.

By living in this spirit of faith, saints have grown to despise themselves and love humiliations, in order that

they might more perfectly resemble Christ, who for our salvation was humiliated, despised, crucified. And so, as St. Augustine says, the love of God has built a city of God in which the saints love God so much that they despise themselves; but disordered love has built another city in which the wicked love themselves so much that they despise God.

A person who lives in this spirit of faith will certainly develop a deep, penetrating, practical faith which will infect others and be a protection against the errors of modern times. The words of St. John (I John 5:4) will then be verified: "This is the victory which overcometh the world : our faith."

CHAPTER 3

Evidences of a Supernatural Spirit*

1. The ***pearl of great*** *price*

This supernatural spirit is a way of thinking, judging, loving, wishing, acting. It appears on every page of the Gospel. St. Matthew, for example, tells us about the businessman who was looking for good pearls: *When he had found one pearl of great price, he went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it* (Matt. 13:46). This precious pearl is a symbol of the supernatural spirit. In the same chapter of St. Matthew we read : *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hid it and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field* (Matt. 13:44). Similarly, St. Paul says (Col. 3:2): "mind the things which are above, not the things that are on earth." This supernatural spirit, in other words, is a spirit of faith, confidence in God, and love of God and one's neighbor. The signs of this faith are the effects which it produces"by the fruit the tree is known" (Matt. 12:33)-humility, mortification, piety, and the three theological virtues.' A supernatural man is described by St. Paul as "a new man" 29

(Eph. 4:23-24): And be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."

The principal signs of a supernatural spirit of faith are:

A joy in reading Sacred Scripture, the Word of God. These writings contain a very beautiful variety, from the simple narratives in the book of Job to the sublime thought of the fourth Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul. The language of Sacred Scripture, because it is the Word of God, our adopted Father, is like the mother tongue of Christians. If the Christian becomes familiar with the words of Sacred Scripture, human eloquence, even the greatest, will become less and less attractive because it does not contain the words of eternal life, the words of salvation. One single sentence from Sacred Scripture can nourish the soul, illuminate it, strengthen it in adversity. Sacred Scripture is something far superior to a simple exposition of dogma, subdivided into special tracts: it is an ocean of revealed truth in which we can taste in advance the joys of eternal life.

A spect for religious authority. Often the purely "natural" man will sec, in the authority of a superior only a restriction rendered necessary by the demands of public order. The "natural" man will not realize that his dependence on a superior will contribute toward his eternal salvation. For that reason, he will limit this authority as much as possible and he will act as the State does toward ecclesiastical authority, as if the authority of the Church were demanded only by the needs of public order, and not something excellent in itself even for our present life.

But the Christian who has a truly supernatural spirit will take a higher view of things. He will realize that the authority of his superior participates in the authority of God Himself, and obedience

will be something profitable and enhancing. He will obey not merely the formal commands of his superiors but even their desires and counsels: his dependence on them will be a joy. In this way lie will be, as it were, raised above himself, realizing that *to serve God is to reign.* That is why St. Paul says: "Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners: but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. 2:19-20). It is a magnificent obedience which brings with it great security.

A desire for the sacraments, like the desire of the stag which pants after the fountains of water. The "supernatural" man will see in the sacraments not merely a religious ceremonial but real sources of grace, through which the infinite merits of Christ are applied to our sou]. His is not merely a belief in their efficacy; he has experienced it directly. Promptly and with avidity lie uses those sacred sources of grace, so that his weekly confession and Holy Communion produce each time a greater and greater fruit. He realizes that each Communion should be substantially more fervent and fruitful than the preceding one, because each new Communion not merely preserves what charity

he has, but increases it. Consequently he disposes himself for a more fruitful reception on the following day, notwithstanding whatever decrease there may be in his "sensible devotion," something purely accidental.

The love of the "supernatural" man for our divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is not a cold "intellectual" love, like that complacency which often follows on one's thought of a thing, or on an ideal which the mind has formed. But from the real presence of our divine Lord a real "fellowship" will be formed: a union firm and intimate, with Jesus Christ. Every action of the day will then be affected by this life-giving presence. It is a life with God, the very life of God and our divine Lord pulsating within us.

This supernatural spirit makes one particularly sensitive to the value of holy water and other sacramentals. Indulgences will be valued as precious gifts from heaven, the reason being that this supernatural life makes one realize the gravity of sin, the demands of divine justice, the infinite value of the merits of Christ, and the value of the merits of our Lady and the saints. In this way, we are built up spiritually from day to day.

An appreciation of liturgical prayer, in that we more and more realize that it is the great prayer of the Church, the song of Christ's Spouse accompanying the unbloody continuation of Christ's sacrifice and prayer. Liturgical prayer has a special value in obtaining those efficacious graces we need. Indeed, the sharing in liturgical prayer is itself a grace; it is like a light which penetrates, for an hour, our mind. To say the Divine Office chorally in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is much better than saying it privately outside choir. One better appreciates the variety which the Divine Office provides, its wonderful simpliciti which, when viewed against the background of fleeting time, forms, as it were, the prelude to eternity. The Office said in this way will feed our own private prayer, a prayer which in itself is another indication of the supernatural spirit. It is interesting to remember that religious orders in the 13th century had no special time allotted for mental prayer, but after Matins and Lauds the religious would freely spend some time in that mental prayer for which liturgical prayer, said in a spirit of faith, had disposed him. It was only when the religious no longer spontaneously devoted himself to mental prayer that lit was found necessary to set aside a special hour for it each day. As a result, it was often less intimate, less on fire, more mechanical, and it was reduced to a discursive meditation from a book, performed at the beginning of each day. Gradually for "mental prayer" the word "meditation" was substituted, though the term "mental prayer" is still popular in the contemplative orders.

A desire for mortification. The fifth indication of a spirit of faith is a desire for mortification. Our human nature is, of course, God's handiwork and it bas very precious qualities of intellect and will.

But our human nature is a fallen one. We have to battle against the "concupiscence of the flesh, of the eyes, and the pride of life," the sources of the seven capital sms, and through them the source of ail sin. Our judgments, therefore, are colored by inclinations which need correcting. Such correction is

wrought by grace precisely as it is the grace of Christ, making us resemble Christ who sorrowed for our sins. This grace also draws one to mortify oneself. The "supernatural" man always remembers, as St. Paul says, that "the flesh pulls against the spirit," and his supernatural life develops in him a hatred of everything that is unordered, undisciplined. His supernatural life shows itself in a spirit of sacrifice and, destroying whatever is unruly, brings peace, "the tranquillity of order." Nothing is more conducive to peace than a spirit of sacrifice.

fied on a "moral" level in the saints. They live, not in themselves, but in God; not for themselves, but entirely forgetful of self, for God and for souls. That is the real test of charity and of the supernatural spirit in a man: they "put off the old man who is corrupted according to the desire of error" (Eph. 4:22). In the saint are verified the words of St Paul: "our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed to the end that we may serve sin no longer" (Rom. 6:6).

2. *Practical conclusions*

Forgetfulness of oneself. Many saints who achieved great things during their lifetime used with confidence those powers which God had given them. Innumerable names could be mentioned: St. Paul, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Dominic, St. Thomas, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier. Yet when we read their lives, we find that they distrusted themselves, that they constantly attacked in themselves any love of self and, a very subtle enemy, pride. In humility as in other virtues, they greatly surpass us. By their life of self-denial they understood in a very practical way that full development of personality is achieved only when one can say: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me." They lost, as it were, their own personality only to substitute that of Christ, achieving what one might call a superior "impersonality," with a will and an intellect higher than their own, so that they judged of things with the mind of God and loved with His will-somewhat as in Christ, although the comparison is deficient, there was no human personality, but only the personality of the Divine Word. What is on the ontological level in Christ is veri

In conclusion, we shall say a word about how we should in practice *live in this supernatural spirit,* not only in ordinary, foreseen circumstances, but in unexpected situations also, and in those matters which have not been determined, but are left to our choice. There is no doubt, of course, that actions which are sacred-the celebration of, or assisting at, Mass, for example-should be performed in a supernatural way. Nor is there any doubt that temptations which clearly lead to sin should be resisted.

But between these two extremes, between the performance of sacred things in a sacred way and the avoidance of evil, there is a whole range of actions which are left to our own personal choice. It is these things which separate men one from the other, because each person's choice will be determined by each person's own heart. The Venerable Fr. Cormier, for example, points out that for some people worldliness becomes "propriety," weakness becomes "moderation," pride becomes "honor," and they describe as "prudent" what is really self-centered opportunism or utilitarianism. Occasionally, they even call "conscience"

something actually opposed to Christian conscience. When asked for something that is really very good, they answer: "In conscience I cannot do it"; and so they regard as "conscience" a pattern of life which they have selected because it is convenient or because it avoids what is disagreeable. Fr. Cormier gives this example: "If a person who is normally moved by a spirit of piety, humility, and mortification, does something which in reality is, or appears to be, somewhat extreme, there is an

uproar against him as if it were an abuse that cannot be tolerated, something unbearably out of order, provocative, injurious."

On the other hand, many people when faced with those things which are left to their choice remember the words of St. Paul: "look to the things which are above, not those which are below." The saints have spoken in this way. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without which they did nothing of importance, they have often acted in a manner surpassing ordinary prudence. Our divine Lord, particularly, acted far beyond ordinary prudence; and when He first foretold His passion, Peter said to Him: "Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee." And Jesus replied: "Thou art a scandal unto me, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men" (Matt. 16:22, 23).

When we are caught unawares, when there is no time to reflect and choose the proper way of acting, nature reveals itself with all its selfishness. But on these occasions a supernatural spirit can also show itself. In a sudden danger, for example, the generous man will often rush to help those who are in need. Even if they have come from dis
tant parts and do not speak the saine language, the friends of God will always recognize each other.

In practice, therefore, what conclusions should we draw -for the priest particularly-about the supernatural spirit? We should work with great energy to have this spirit. We should consider, therefore, not the small good which has already been achieved, but all that still remains to be accomplished. St. Paul says: "forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before" (Phil. 3:13). We should not congratulate ourselves toe, much on the progress which we have already made, but we should consider rather what yet remains to be accomplished.

We should say to ourselves: *For me, to live is Christ, and to die is* gain (Phil. 1:21). St. Thomas pointed out that some people live for hunting, some for soldiering, others for intellectual study-but the Christian lives for Christ, because Christ is the object of his faith, his thoughts, his desires, his affective and effective love. His conversation is with Christ. We should say: "Imprint, O Lord, in my heart a living love for You."

Happy is the man whose supernatural life has been renewed, "who is rooted and founded in charity." He has renounced himselF and created things and depends only on God. He 6nds his happiness, therefore, in divine things only. God can reign without any obstacle in his heart, and gradually he becomes assimilated to Christ. His ministry, therefore, will be Fruitful in spite of whatever difficulties come his way. When he bas worked, studied, written, preached, the Holy Spirit will make bis ministry fruitful.

If his faith is great he will succeed, even though he is a priest of only mediocre ability.

What a great joy it is to the priest who has reached this stage at the end of his life. It is not impossible, because "God does not order us to do impossible things; when He orders us to do anything, He wants us to do what we can and to ask His help for whatever is beyond our power." It is certain that God has called us to sanctity, because He has called us to heaven where there are only saints. T'hat is true of all Christians: a fortiori it is true of priests who share in the priesthood of Christ.

CHAPTER 4

The General Obligation

of Christians to Seek Perfection

/. Introduction

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. A large portion of this section is taken from the "Spiritual Exercises" of H. M. Cormier. O.P.
2. See Pius XI, Encyclical of December *20, 1935: Ad Catholici Sacerdotü.*

We are not concerned with that lowest form of perfection which excludes mortal sins only, nor even with that middle grade of perfection which excludes mortal sins and deliberate venial sins. We

are speaking of perfection in the proper sense of the word, which rules out deliberate imperfections and a careless way of living. And we are not speaking of the *invitation* to perfection strictly so called, because there is no doubt about this: all are invited to be fully perfect.

The question is whether all Christians have a general *obligation* to seek perfection in charity. We are not dealing therefore with that *Special* obligation-the violation of which would, as it does in the religious state, involve a special sin-but with a *general* obligation.

A difficulty arises when we wish to harmonize certain statements of our divine Lord which at first sight seem to be opposed.

On the one hand, Christ said to the rich young man (Matt. 19:21) : "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou 39

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hast and give to the poor . . . And come follow me." The words: "If thou wilt be perfect," seem to express a counsel, not an obligation. Not all Christians, therefore, are bound to seek perfection. It seems obligatory only for those who have already promised to follow the evangelical counsel.'

Yet, on the other hand, Christ said to all (Matt. 5:48): "Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." In bis Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, discussing these words of our Lord, St. Thomas says: "Clerics more than lay people are bound to the perfection of an excellent life; but to the perfection of charity all are bound."

Moreover, St. Thomas proves 2 that perfection consists essentially not in the counsels, but in the precepts, because the first precept bas no limitation: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27). According to St. Thomas, therefore, the perfection of chariry falls under a precept, as an end which must be attained.

St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and St. Francis de Sales hold that all must seek the perfection of charity, each one according to bis condition. In this way, the perfection of charity, as an end, falls under precept.

How can we harmonize those words of our divine Lord: "If thou wilt to be perfect. . ." and "Be you perfect"? g We may summarize our conclusion in four propositions: 1. All Christians are strictly bound to love God *in appreciation* above all things.

2. In virtue of the first precept ai] are bound to strive toward the perfection of charity, but each according to bis

condition, one in married life, another as a religious laybrother, another as a secular priest.

3. Nobody is obliged actually to have perfect charity. 4. Not all are obliged to strive for it immediately and explicitly by following the counsels.

2. The obligation to love God above all things

It is the command of our divine Lord: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with they whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment" (Matt. *22: 37-39;* cf. Deut. 6:5; Luke *10:27:* Mark *12:30).*

Everybody, therefore, must love God at least in *appreciation* or *in estimation (amor aestimatinnis),* if not *in intensity,* above all things, and more than he loves himselF. And as St. Thomas says: "He who in any way whatsoever reaches the perfection of divine love observes this precept. The lowest degree of this love exists when nothing is loved more than God, or opposed to God, or equally with God; he who does not reach this degree of perfection in no way fulfils the precept."4

As Fr. Barthier points out,' this divine precept condemns many of the so-called modern "freedoms"-freedom of conscience, Freedom of worship, absolute freedom of the press, of teaching-winch give the same rights to truth and falsehood, good and evil, as if God the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Good had not a very strict and inalienable right te, the obedience of our intellect and

will, the right to be loved above all things. To admit these liberties, thereFore, and to defend them without any limit

and without any subordination to God, is to turn oneself away from God and act against God. As a matter of fact, to be neutral in practice between liberalism and Catholicism is to love something equally with God. The love of God, even in its lowest degree, ought to rule ail our affections, so that, in St. Thomas's formula: "nothing [may be loved] more than God, or opposed to God, or equally with God; he who does not reach this degree of perfection in no way fulfils the precept."

He who wishes to avoid every mortal sin already loves God *in estimation* above ail things. Thus, the good Christian mother, although she may have a more *intense* love for her son whom she sees and touches, *in estimation (aestimative)* loves God more than her son.

3. Seek ing perfection in love

A U Christians must strive a fter the perfection o f charity, each one according to his condition in lif e.B

This statement seems exaggerated te, some Christians who wrongly think that only priests or religious are bound to advance in charity. Others admit this proposition in theory only, but do not realize what is means in practice.

Let us see: A. The scriptural basis for this proposition; B. How it can be proved theologically.

A. The above proposition is expressed in so many words in various parts of Sacred Scripture. We may quote the following examples: «Se you perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). "He that is just, let him be justified still" (Apoc. 22:11). Similarly in various parts of the New Testament which are reFerred to in the *Concordance* under the word *cresco:* "Grow in grace and in

the love of God" (2 Pet. 3:18). "Laying aside ail malice . . . that thereby you may grow unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:1-2). "Doing the truth in charity, we may in ail things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15). Seing fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). "Wherefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to things more perfect" (Hebr. 6:1).

From these various quotations From Sacred Scripture, St. Thomas deduces: "As far as progress toward perfection is concerned, one should always strive to reach a state of perfection.'" And he puts himself an objection: Perfection consists in the counsels, because it is said (Matt. 19:21) : "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast. . . °' But not ail are bound to observe the counsels. How, therefore, can St. Paul say: "we are drawn to perfection"?

St. Thomas answers this difficulty: "Perfection is twofold: *exterior,* which consists in exterior (imperated) acts. These are the 'signs' of interior acts-virginity, for example, or voluntary poverty. Not ail are bound to this type of perfection. The second is *interior* perfection, which consists in the love of God and one's neighbor, to which St. Paul refers in the first Epistle to the Colossians (3:14) 'have charity, which is the bond of perfection.' Not ail are bound to have this perfection, the perfection of charity, but *all are bound to strive toward it* because I f *one does not ivish to love God more, one does not do what charity demands.* ' That is why St. Thomas quotes the words of St. Bernard: "in the ways of God, not to advance is to fall back." Similarly, in his commentary on verse 12, c. 19, of St. Matthew's Gospel: "he who can hear, let him take heed,"

St. Thomas says: "he who does not always wish to be better is not free from blame."

B. The above proposition can be proved theologically in two ways: (a) from the precept of charity; (b) from the state of charity of those on the way to heaven.

(a). *F rom the precept o f charity.*^ The first precept has no limitation: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." It follows, therefore, that the perfection of charity is the end which we are commanded to reach. From this we may deduce, says St. Thomas that "all, both lay and religious, are bound to do,

in some degree, whatever good they can." [9] The words of Ecclesiastes are addressed to everybody in general: "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly" (9:10). One way of fulfilling this precept is by avoiding sin, by doing what one is able to do according to the condition of one's state, as long as there is no contempt for the doing of better things-a contempt which would lock one's soul against spiritual progress.

The entire third article of *q. 184, 2-2,* should be read carefully, because what we shall now say is implicitly contained in it.

(b). *From the state of charity of one who is on the way to heaven.* Just as grace is the seed of glory, so the charity of a person in this life is meant to blossom out into the charity of heaven. "Charity," said 5t. Thomas, "is perfected when it is strengthened." This supernatural life of charity is first in a state of infancy, then of adolescence, finally in a state of manhood. This development is essentially connected with the idea of a path, because otherwise the path would no longer be a means of reaching the destination, but would be the destination itself. In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read: "broad is the path that leads to destruction, and narrow the path that leads to life"; to walk spiritually is to advance. Similarly in the Gospel, charity is compared to a seed or a gram of mustard which must grow, or it is compared to talents. We read in Matthew's Gospel of the master who said of him who had received one talent, but had hidden it in the earth: "Take ye away therefore the talent from him and give it him that hath ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away" *(25:28-29).*

This is true, in different ways, of the beginner, the advanced, and even of the perfect-of whom St. Thomas says: "the nearer they approach the end, the more ought they to grow." [1']

4. Solving some difficulties

One may raise an objection: The conclusion does not follow, because St. Thomas himself says: "He does not break a precept who has not reached the middle grades of perfection, as long as he has set foot on even the lowest grade." ^Therefore not all Christians are bound to have a charity greater than xvhat they actually have.

We can answer this objection by considering the precepts themselves.F

1. The perfection of charity falls under the precept of charity not as its subject *(materia),* but as the end to be attained. If this were not so, the precept would be limited

and what is outside that limit would be a matter of counsel only. This however, is not true, as the wording of the precept shows.[1'] Therefore, for everybody the perfection of charity is commanded not as something to be reached immediately, but as an end toward which each one, according to his condition, should suive.

2. If one were to make no attempt to increase in charity one would not make any act of charity at all. This would be against the precept, because all Christians are bound to avoid sin, venial as well as mortal, and this cannot be done without meritorious acts by which the soul either disposes itselF to advance or else actually increases in charity. On Sunday at least, all Christians ought to hear Mass, and perform some acts of charity and religion toward God.

3. Finally, the precept of charity is the end of all the other precepts which are concerned with means to the end. All Christians, however, ought to fulfil these secondary precepts, with charity as their end, and this cannot be done without merit and the disposition to advance. The precept that we must have charity-at least ordinary charityimplies the precept that we must strive for greater charity.

At this point another objection may be raised. A person who merely makes remiss acts of chariry does not sin, but merits, and yet according to St. Thomas he makes no progress.

A nswer: "In the way of God, one advances not only when charity is increased by acts of charity but also when the soul is disposed for this increase."'S This happens in the case of remiss acts, in

so far as they are *meritorious;* but in that they are *remiss* they cannot sufficiently oppose inordinate passions, and under that aspect, therefore, they

dispose for sin. Thus "not to advance is to fall back." To impede the progress of charity would be to sin against the precept of charity.

5. *Further clarification*

Nobody is bound to have extraordinary charity, the charity of the perfect.'6 It is sufficient that the beginner should aim at the charity of the proficient, and the proficient should aim at the charity of the perfect, each one according to his condition. Moreover, in every spiritual age there are many-grades. It is certainly necessary for salvation that each one should die in the state of grace, even in its lowest degree. This is clearly stated by St. Thomas," when he says that the perfection which is necessary for salvation is that which excludes ail mortal sin. Again he writes: "There is another perfection which is of supererogation, when one adheres to God in an extraordinary way, and this is done by removing the heart from temporal things" 1a-that is, by effectively observing the three counsels. The counsels do not bind as the precepts do.

All Christians are not bound to strive explicitly-that is by using the properly proportioned means-for the perfection of charity. Nor are all individually and immediately invited.ls But they ought to avoid all deliberate venial sins and increase in charity; and if they did this they would be called not only remotely but proximately, even efficaciously, to high perfection.

St. Thomas, indeed, teaches that the perfection of charity falls under precept, in that it is an end toward which *one ought to strive in some degree,* by increasing in charity.20 It is not, however, necessary that each and every one should

strive *explicitly* toward it, by using *means which are immediately proportioned* to heroic virtues, even though all ought to, if occasion demands, suffer martyrdom rather than call their faith into doubt.

Similarly, St. Thomas teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation, but he does not say this about the higher grades of the gifts nor of the act of infused contemplation." All Christians should strive not toward the effective practice of the three counsels, but *toward the spirit of the* counsels-that is, *toward a spirit of mortification.*

Thus our *main conclusion* is clear: All Christians, each one according to his condition, are bound to strive for greater charity, acting always for the supernatural motive of charity, as St. Paul says: (Col. 3:17): "Whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Those, however, who sin against this precept do not commit a special sin against perfection, because the obligation is a general, and not a special, one.

6. Christians and the counsels

Is each individual Christian invited to follow, according to his condition, any of the counsels? Yes, each individual is invited. Indeed, it is very difficult to observe all the precepts if one does not follow at least some of the counsels, in keeping with one's condition in life. These counsels help one avoid the imperfections which immediately dispose one to venial sin and help one seek for the good in keeping with his position in life. Thus some prayers which are not of precept are very useful. "It is very rare to find a Christian

faithful to al] the secondary precepts if he neglects al] practice of the evangelical counsels." -:

Is each individual Christian invited to keep the three general counsels? No, he is not, because not all are called to the religious life. But each one should strive to have the spirit of the counsels, **i**.e., the spirit of mortification. For our divine Lord says: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who were born so from their mothers' womb: and there are eunuchs who are made so by men: and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the

kingdom of heaven. He that can take it, let him take it" (Matt. 19:11-12). In his commentary on this text, St. Thomas says: "It is true that it is fitting that some should not marry, but this is not true for all, because not all have that virtue which will enable them to abstain. But it is fitting for those who have that virtue, because to some it is given, not through any work of their own but through the gift of grace, according to what is said in the Book of Wisdom (8:21): 'I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it.' That man should be able to live in the flesh and yet not of the flesh is not man's work but God's." 2' It is evident, therefore, as St. Thomas says in the same text in his commentary on St. Matthew, that al] men are bound, each according to his condition, ii to aspire to better things, so that he who does not always wish to be better is net without blame" (cf. Rom. 6:3-13).

From the main conclusion of this Chapter: All Christians are bound to strive after greater charity, each according to his condition, we may derive certain corollaries:

1. On the path to God, not to advance is to fall back.

One must advance-just as a child must grow physically if he is not to become stunted and deformed. The carriage which delays too long at its stopping-places will be late.

2. Progress in charity should gradually become more rapid. "The closer a naturally moving body (like a stone falling) gets to its goal, the faster is its speed. But grace works like nature. The closer, therefore, those in grace approach their end, the more ought they to grow." z In another work, *L'amour de Dieu et la Croix de* Jésus, t. I, 150-162, we have explained this corollary at greater length, and applied it to Holy Communion and to our Lady's progress in charity during her lifetime.

3. Even though perfect charity is the object of a precept (that is, it falls under a precept as its end), great actual graces are offered to us, proportioned to this end, because God does not ask the impossible. Thus Christ bas said: *Be you perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. 5:48). Similarly, St. Paul says: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (I Thess 4:3). "God chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity" (Eph. 1:4). Therefore we ought to hope for that goal, and we should not say: it is against humility to aspire to such heights. Perfect charity, thereFore-like that in the transforming union which is the perfect disposition for the beatific vision -is the normal term of progress in charity, or baptismal grace.

We have suf%ciently indicated, therefore, that Christian perfection consists essentially in the observance of the precepts, and that the perfection of chariry falls under the supreme precept, not as its subject matter-something to
be immediately achieved-but as its term, toward which all must suive, each one according to his condition, one person in the married state, another as a priest, another as a religious.2t

Christian perfection, therefore, only accidentally and instrumentally consists in the evangelical counsels strictly so-called; they are *means* by which one may more easily and speedily rise to sanctity. But a person in the married state can, without the effective practice of the counsels, be a saint, as long as he bas the spirit of the counsels and is prepared to observe them if it were necessary-to keep absolute chastity, for example, after the death of a wife, or poverty in the case of financial ruin.

As a complement to this doctrine, it should be noted that when we compare counsel with precept and say that the counsel concerns "a greater good" this does not mean a good greater than what is prescribed by the precept, because even very great charity falls under a precept (as its term), and martyrdom can, if occasion demands, be of precept also. A "greater good" means greater than the corresponding legitimate activity· In other words:

-poverty consecrated to God is better than the legitimate use of riches.
-absolute chastity dedicated to God is better than the legitimate use of matrimony.
-religious obedience is better than the legitimate exercise of our freedom.

This doctrine is confirmed by the division of counsels made by St. Thomas .211

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

I. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 3, ad 1. 2. See *Ibid.,* corpus.

3. See Cajetan's commentary on 2-2, q. 184, a. 3; G. L. Passerini, *De Statibus Hominum;* Barthier, *De la Perfection chrétienne et de la Perfection religieuse; P. A.* Weiss, O.P., *Apologie des Christentums,* vol. 5, index "Vollkommenheit" Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* and T *he T hree Ages of the Spiritual Pif e.*

4. S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 3, ad 2.

5. Barthier, op. *cit., vol. I, p.* 218.

6. See *Ibid., pp.* 315, 419; Passerini, *op. cit., p.* 758, number 13. 7. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Hebr.* 6:2.

8. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 3. *9. Ibid.,* q. 186, a. 2, ad 2. *10. I bid.,* q. 24, a. *9.*

II. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Hebr.* 10:12. 12. S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 3, ad 2.

13. See Barthier, *op. cit., vol. I, p.* 317. 14. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 3.

15. Ibid., q. 24, a. 6, ad 3.

16. See Barthier, *op. cit., vol. I, pp.* 279 *f£.* 17. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 2.

18. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Phil.* 3:12.

19. See Barthier, op. *cit., vol. I, p.* 284; St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Hebr.* 6:11.

20. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 3. 21. See *Ibid.,* 1-2, q. 68, a. 2. 22. Barthier, op. *cit., vol. II, p.* 219.

23. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matt.* 1911-12; see S.T., 1-2, q. 108, a. 4, ad 1.

24. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Hebr.* 10:25. 25. See S.T., 2-2, q. 183, a. 3.

26. See *Ibid,* 1-2, q. 108, a. 4.

CHAPTER S

The Obligation of Religious to Seek Perfection

1. Introduction

We are speaking of religious as su-ch, even though they have not received any sacred orders-lay brothers, for example, or sisters, or nuns. In Chapter 6, we will discuss priests in particular. We are speaking, too, of perfection, properly so called, as distinct from that lowest form of perfection which excludes mortal sins only, and that medium perfection which excludes mortal sins and fully deliberate venial sms, but not a lukewarm way of acting. We are dealing, therefore, with that higher perfection of the perfect which excludes deliberate imperfections and a careless way of acting or receiving the sacraments. Such perfection implies the observance of the counsels and works of supererogation. We are discussing a special, and not a general, obligation. There is a notable distinction between them, because, as we have said, all Christians have a general obligation of striving after greater charity, and because this obligation is a general one its violation is not a special sin 53

distinct from those sins which spring from a violation of the precepts. We now ask: Is there for religious a *special* obligation of striving after perfection strictly so called, so that its violation would be a special sin?

The normal answer to this question is: Religious, by virtue of their profession, are bound to strive after perfection strictly so called, by using the general means-the three counsels and the corresponding vows ot obedience, poverty and chastity-and those special means which are the rules of each one's Order or Institute.

To explain this doctrine, we shall consider this special obligation in relation to: (1) its basis, or efficient cause; (2) its nature, or formal cause; (3) its purpose, or final cause; (4) its subject matter, or the general and particular means for achieving this purpose; (5) its excellence.

2. *Basis of this obligation*

The basis of this special obligation is the *religious profession* by which one embraces the religious state, a state of perfection. "One is in a state of perfection, properly so called, not because one has made an act of perfect charity, but because one has bound oneself perpetually, with a certain solemnity, to those things which are of perfection. It can happen, of course, that some do not observe that to which they have bound themselves, and others observe that to which they have not bound themselves. . . . Therefore it is quite possible that some of those not in a state of perfection are perfect and others are in a state of perfection without however being perfect." [1]

"State of perfection," however, is sometimes used not in a juridical or canonical, but in a spiritual sense. Thus St. John of the Cross speaks of the "state of perfection" in a spiritual sense, as being a stable perfection.

Similarly, St. Thomas says: "By an interior spiritual growth *one reaches a state of perfection in the eyes of God;* but canonically one reaches a state of perfection only by a change in those things that are exterior." -In another passage he says: "A perpetual obligation, taken with a certain solemnity, to observe those things which are of perfection is essential for the [juridical] state of perfection. Religious and bishops have both these essentials. Religious, in order to give themselves more Freely to God, bind themselves by vow to abstain from certain temporal things which they might otherwise lawfully use. Similarly, bishops, by assuming the pastoral office, which implies 'that the pastor lay down his life for his sheep,' bind themselves to those things which are of perfection." [3]

Thus, religious are in a state for the acquisition of perfection, and bishops are juridically in a state for the exercise of perfection.

According to modern legislation, simple vows are sufficient to constitute the religious state. This was stated by Gregory XIII.

The supreme precept must always be kept in mind. It glorifies, enlarges, intensifies, and enlivens religious life, which must of its very nature observe charity or love for God and neighbor. Religious life is wholly guided by the three theological virtues, and the reason lis simple. Those three virtues constitute the life of a Christian and are in

themselves of a higher order than the three religious vows which constitute the characteristic element of the religious life.

3. *Nature of this obligation*

It is a *special obligation to strive after perfection.* "[Religious] men enter a state of perfection, not as it were professing themselves to be perfect, but professing that they will strive for perfection. St. Paul says, therefore, m his Epistle to the Philippians (3:12): 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend . . .' The person, therefore, who enters a state of perfection does not lie or simulate, if he is not already perfect, but he does so by withdrawing his intention of striving for perfection.' St. Thomas also says: "It is not necessary that the person in a religious state should already be perfect, but that he should strive after perfection." [3] If a religious revokes his intention of striving after perfection, he sins, not only against the general obligation binding all Christians to advance in charity but also

against a special obligation. The religious, however, is not bound actually to reach perfection in this life.

Would it be a mortal sin for a religious to withdraw his intention of tending toward perfection? (cf. 2-2, q. 184, a 9). It would be a mortal sin in either of the following two cases: (a) If a religious, or even a simple Christian, were to despise the pursuit of perfection; (b) If in some grave matter he were to break his religious vows. Such an act implies a withdrawal of the intention to strive after perfection. The transgression of external observances is not a mortal sin unless done through contempt of the rule, or unless there is a formal precept either specially made by the Superior or contained in the Rule.

Some rules, like the Rule of the Order of Preachers, do not bind either under mortal or venial sin, but only to the penalty prescribed. This is true of the transgression of the rule as such; but in fact (or *per accidens)* there will often be a sin of negligence. When the rule is not observed the reason may be an excessive attachment to something created -like the rich young man who did not reply when our Lord called him, because he was too much attached to temporal things.s Moreover, it rarely happens that a religious can keep his vows if he neglects in practice the various observances of his Institute, just as it very rarely happens that the ordinary Christian can keep all the precepts if he neglects to practice any of the counsels.

/s *the obligation which a religious has of tending to perfection distinct from the obligation of keeping the three vows? And does the obligation bind under pain of mortal sin?* Several theologians hold that this obligation is distinct from the obligation of the three vows, and that it binds under pain of mortal sin. The Thomistic teaching is that which is defended by the Salmanticenses, who quote Cajetan and others in its favor. This teaching is: *It is an obligation binding under pain of mortal sin, but not distinct from the obligation to observe the three vows.*

(a) "A religious is bound under pain of mortal sin to strive for perfection, because this is the substantial and principal obligation of his state." And why? "Such an

obligation consists in a certain continuous movement toward perfection, so that a religious can never stop in this movement and progress, nor can he ever say that he has gone far enough. He must always aspire to higher things; in the path toward God not to advance is to fall back.

"A religious, however, is not for that reason bound to strive after perfection by every work of supererogationi.e., by all the works recommended by the counsels-but by those means only which are prescribed in the rules of his religious institute; he has not bound himself to any other perfection. Consequently, this obligation is not distinct from the obligation of keeping his vows and observing the rule of his profession; it is the same obligation or is included in it. There are not, therefore, two distinct sins. A religious cannot strive toward perfection in a more perfect way than by a careful observance of those things which are proper to his state. They are the most suitable means for reaching his goal, and they lead to the height of perfection. Perfection does not consist, for example, in extraordinary penances.

(b) "When does a religious sin mortally against his obligation of striving after perfection?-(l) When he breaks the vows in some serious matter; (2) When through formal contempt he neglects the counsels which lead to perfection; (3) When he breaks the rule precisely in order to impede perfection; (4) When he firmly makes up his mind not to bother about perfection, saying that it is quite sufficient to remain in a lower state-for example, if a religious were to say: 'It is sufficient to remain in my present state of mediocrity'; (5) When by his bad example he induces others to lead a depraved life or relax the rulei.e., in a grave matter.'"

4. Purpose of this obligation

It is quite clear from St. Thomas that the fullness of perfection which is the purpose of this obligation is found only in intimate union with God through the virtues and the gifts. This is perfection strictly so called, consisting in perfect union with God and one's neighbor, through the

imitation of Christ-the perfect fulfilment of the first precept to which are subordinated the evangelical counsels.

St. Thomas says: "Religious bind themselves by vow to abstain from worldly things which they might [otherwise] quite legitimately use, in order more freely to devote themselves to the things of God. In this dedication consists the perfection of the present life. That is why Dionysius says *(Eccl. Hier, vi)* of religious: *Some call them* BEPp7fEY7RL, *i.e., servants of God, on account of their pure service and bondage, others call them* ûôvaxot *on account of the indivisible and single minded life which by their being wrapped in* [contemplating] *indivisible things unites them in a Godlike union and a perfection beloved of God."* b

St. Thomas says also that perfection consists essentially in the precept of charity to which are subordinated the other precepts and counsels.e And in another text he says: "The religious state is a kind of holocaust by which one gives oneself and what one possesses to God." 1°

The religious should reach this perfection of charity by the imitation of Christ, because Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. As man, Christ was completely withdrawn from the spirit of the world and completely united

to God, totally consecrated in His human nature, and-m all His faculties and actions, to God. Thus it is said particularly of religious: "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). St. Thomas comments: "Do not taste the things of this world, because you have died to the world; your life is hidden in Christ, because Christ, being in the glory of the Father, is hidden for us: and so the life which is given to us through Him is hidden with Him in the glory of God the Father: according to what is said: 'How great is the multitude of your sweetness which you have hidden from those who fear you, etc.' (Ps. 30:20): 'To the conqueror I will give a hidden manna' (Apoc. 2:7)." "-This life hidden in Christ is found perfectly, however, only in the mystical life.

Every religious life, therefore-whether active or contemplative-can of itself lead the perfectly faithful soul to intimate union with God and sanctity, so that it can enter heaven immediately after death.

In the active life, the genus "religious life" is of greater dignity than that which makes it specifically differentthose things which are directed to external works of mercy. Every religious life, whether active or contemplative, leads directly to the perfect fulfilment of the first precept to which are subordinated the counsels and the Rule.lz

And so, in order that this purpose of religious life may appear in a more concrete and complete way, one should say that Christ wishes to restore in it, as far as possible, the triple harmony which existed in the state of original justice, and which has been restored in Him and in the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In the state of original justice there were:

(a) Perfect harmony between God and the soul, which was completely subordinated to Him through the three theological virtues, the corresponding gifts and humble obedience; (b) Perfect harmony between soul and body, by the perfect subordination of the passions to reason and will, and by the subordination of the body to the soul, particularly through perfect chastity;

(c) Perfect harmony between man and external things which were meant to help man. In this way, harmony decended from God to the lowest things.

After original sin, which destroyed the highest harmony, and consequently the other two, in their place came the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the fiesh, and the pride of life-that is, the immoderate desire of external things; there came also the immoderate desire of carnal pleasure and the use of one's liberty without humble subjection to God.

To restore this triple harmony, Christ gave three counsels concerning a greater good, counsels to abstain from the use of lawful things in order more easily to avoid any excess, using the world and yet not using it. These three counsels are: (a) The counsel of poverty, by which one surrenders the dominion over, or at least the use of, exterior goods, and consecrates them to God; (b) the counsel of absolute chastity, by which one renounces and consecrates body and heart to God; (c) the counsel

of obedience, by which one surrenders the use of one's own will and consecrates it to God. These three virtues of poverty, chastity and ohedience are subordinated to the virtue of religion, from which the vow proceeds. In this way, the triple harmony of the state of original justice is, as far as possible, restored:

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S. *The three vows*

The means of perfection in the religious life are:

(a) *The evangelical counsels* of obedience poverty, and chastity, which are the general means-sure, very useful, though not absolutely necessary—-of reaching perfect charity;

(b) the *rules* of one's Institute, which are the special means adapted to the particular end of this or that religious order.

When we speak of the counsels, it must be remembered that the *three vows are essential to the religious state.* These three counsels are given by our divine Lord: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor . . . and come follow me" (Matt. 19:21): "there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12).

The religious state consists in the exercise of those things which lead to the perfection of charity. Two things, therefore, are necessary: separation and consecration: (1) Man must separate himself from those things which may prevent him from giving his entire affection to God (the

negative aspect), (2) Man must offer himself to God in holocaust, or perfect sacrifice (the positive aspect).

Three things can prevent one from giving one's entire affection to God:

-greed for external goods, or a seeking after them, which is removed by the vow of poverty;
-a desire for sensible pleasures and the care of wife and children, which is removed by the vow of chastity;

-the disorder of the human will, which is removed by the vow of obedience.

Similarly three things are appropriately offered to God so that the sacrifice may be perfect:

-external goods, offered through the vow of poverty; -the good of the body, offered through the vow of chastity;
-the good of one's will, offered in the vow of obedience.

These three vows, therefore, are essential to the religious state,

-both as it is a state of separation from the world, -and as it is a state of consecration te God.l'

The acts of the three religious virtues are offered to God in the higher virtue of religion, the virtue to which vows pertain and whose proper object is the worship of God. This life, therefore, is truly a perfect sacrifice, in imitation of the life of Christ; and the religious who sms against the vows of religion commits a sacrilege.

The virtue of religion is commanded by charity; consequently all religion acts, whether they pertain to poverty, chastity or obedience, are directed through the virtue of religion to growth in charity and its perfection.

It is more meritorious to do something through a vow than without a vow : (1) because it thus gains the merit of a higher virtue, the virtue of religion; (2) because man thus offers tô God not only the act but also the power to make it; (3) because by a vow the will becomes more firmly fixed on what is good and so has greater meriti'

Excellence of religion-' **IIf©**

The excellence of religious life appears in its relation to the theological virtues, by which we are united to God. Poverty, whereby we abandon all human help, leads us to â perfect hope, grounded on divine help. Hope, théreFore, gives life to the vow of poverty.

Chastity, whereby we renounce legitimate sense pleasures and the strength of married love, leads us to a perfect love of God. As a consequence, charity vitalizes the vow of chastity.

Obedience, by which we renounce our own will and judgment, leads us to the perfect life of faith, a life in which all we are and have is confidently placed in the hands of God. We may then say that faith is what makes alive the vow of obedience. The religious must obey his superiors as lie would obey our divine Lord; he looks upon the rules of his community as rules given by God Himself; by his ready obedience he becomes like Abraham, the father of those who believe, who obeyed Godby preparing to sacrifice his only son Isaac.

As you can see, there is an intimate relation between the three religious virtues and the three theological virtues, in that hope is like the sou] of poverty; faith, the sou] of obedience; and charity, the soul of chastity.

The excellence of religious life when compared with the ordinary Christian life may be judged under three headings : (1) In relation te, God, Christ, and the Church; (2) In relation to the religious himself; (3) In relation to one's neighbor.

(1) The religious life is a state which gives more glory

to God, because it offers to God a perfect sacrifice or holocaust. The glory of God requires a clear knowledge of God and praise of Him *(clara Dei notitia cum laude).* But God is more perfectly known and praised in the religious life, in which are fully verified the words of the Lord's prayer "hallowed be thy name."

The religious life shows forth better the virtue of Christ, and the redemption or restoration which He brings us. The religious life helps considerably in manifesting brilliantly and continually the sanctity of the Church, which is one of its "notes."

(2) Religious life is more secure, more free from sinfree, that is, from the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life.'s The vows impose a new obligation, but they help more than they burden.'6

It is a *more meritorious* life, because he who fulfils the counsels advances more in charity, the principle of merit. It is a life *more holy* and *more Godlike,* because it unites the soul more closely to God.

(3) The religious life is more useful than a secular one because of the *example* which it gives and the *prayers and satisfaction* which religious ought to offer for others; it is also more useful because of various works of mercy, both spiritual and corporal. _

should be read. It is certain that the religious is bound by tire three evangelical counsels, but only to those exercises of the counsels prescribed by his own religious rule.

6. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Matt. 19:21.*

7. The Salmanticenses, *Theologia Moralis,* t. 4, *De Statu Reügioso, pp. 4ff.*

8. S.T., 2-2, q. *184,* a.. *5.9.* See *ibid.,* a. *3.*

10. Ibid., q. *186, a. 7.*

11. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Col. 3:3. 12.* See S.T., *2-2,* q. *152,* a. *4.*

13. See *Ibid.,* q. *186,* a. *7. 14.* See *Ibid.,* q. *88,* a. 6.

15. See Barthier, *De la Perfection chrétienne et de la Perfection religieuse,* col *p* *qQ2 245*

16. See S.T., 2-2, q. 186, a. 10. ' 11

NOTES TO CHAPTER S

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5. *Ibid., q. 186,* a. 1, ad 3. The second article ofthis question

CHAPTER 6

Priestly Perfection

Our problem can best be stated by a simple exposition of some opposing opinions. There are at least three different theories, which at first sight seem absolutely opposed tel each other; but because they consider different aspects of priestly life they can, I think, be harmonized in a higher synthesis and in line with the teaching of St. Thomas.

FIRST THEORY

A secular priest is not bound to strive for perfection strictly se, called because he is not in the state of perfection to be acquired-and in this he differs from the religious who has made profession. Nor is he in the state of perfection to be exercised-and in this he differs from a bishop.

This is the theory of many secular priests who consider the priestly life more as canonists than as ascetics and mystics: Because we are not religious, we are not bound, as religious are, to evangelical perfection, austerity, or a life of prayer. Thus, occasionally, very good priests, hearing this theory which they think to be true, imagine that they cannot reach perfection unless they leave their ministry [69]

and enter a monastery. Even some religious say the secular priest is not really bound to strive for perfection, because he is not in a state of perfection; indeed it is very difficult for him to reach perfection if he does not enter a religious order.[1] It would mean that priests would have to neglect the sanctification of their flock in order to work out their own sanctification.

SECOND THEORY

All priests, even "secular" priests, are really bound, by reason of their ordination and the duties connected with the real and mystical body of Christ, to strive after perfection strictly so called. Indeed, it would be very fitting that the "secular" priest become a religious, take three vows and live in community-like the ancient canons regular, attached to parishes-so that in a sanctified way he may exercise his priesthood. A priest should not be "secular": this term is admitted by the Church, but it did not come from the Church nor does it express the priestly spirit.

Thus, according to Dom Gréa, it is not fitting that a priest should be a "secular," but it is very fitting that he should be a regular.[2] Cardinal Mercier says something similar: "Secular priests-Oh! that horrible phrase, secular priest." [3] It may be admitted, however, that he is called "secular" not by reason of his spirit, but by reason of his occupations which are materially in the world. Cardinal Mercier prefers the expression "diocesan priest" or "diocesan clergy" to the expression "secular clergy."

THIRD THEORY

In virtue of his ordination and office, a secular priest should not merely strive after perfection; he should actually

be in (or at least participate in) that *state* of perfection *"to be exercised,"* which is proper to bishops. Indeed, he would not become more perfect by entering a religious order; for, by virtue of his ordination and office, he is already greater than a religious who has not been ordained. He is already a religzous not of St. Dominic or St. Ignatius, but of Christ. Thus Dionysius says in his *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia (c. 6):* "a monastic order should follow priestly orders and by imitating them rise to divine things.'"

Some even maintain, as St. Thomas points out: "It is more difficult for a parish priest or an archdeacon to live well than a religious. Parish priests or archdeacons, therefore, are of more perfect virtue than religious" [5]-priests as well as lay brothers.

St. Thomas answers this objection by making a distinction: "A difficulty which arises from the difficulty of a work increases the perfection of a virtue, and this is true of religious life; but a difficulty caused by external obstacles . . . sometimes lessens the perfection of virtue-for example, when one does not love the virtue sufficiently well to wish to overcome the obstacles to virtue; sometimes, however, it is a sign of more perfect virtue; for example, when one does not forsake virtue although one is hindered by obstacles which are involuntary or unavoidable." [6]

THOMISTIC SOLUTION

These three theories present three different aspects of the priestly life. Considering all three aspects in the light of St. Thomas's teaching, we may say:

(a) *A "secular" or diocesan priest is not, strictly speaking, in any state of perfection,* and because of the vows of

poverty and obedience he would gain additional merit were he to become a religious.'

(b) *However, in virtue of his ordination and office, which require greater interior sanctity than is required by the religious state, he ought to strive for perfection strictly so called*

Our first proposition agrees with the first theory which considers priestly life in an external way; from a canonical point of view a secular priest is not in "a state of perfection."

Our second proposition agrees in certain aspects with the second and third theories and contains whatever truth is in them.

According to this doctrine, which we will immediately explain, a secular priest has a "special obligation" to strive after perfection strictly so called, which excludes-as far as human frailty allows-not only mortal sins but also deliberate venial sms and deliberate imperfections. This obligation, according to our solution, is not distinct from the obligation of fulfiling worthily and in a holy manner the various offices of priestly life: the celebration of Mass, the recitation of the office, the hearing of confessions, and in general the sanctification of souls. This special obligation is contracted by the reception of minor and major orders. And in virtue of the supreme precept these duties must be carried out with increasing perfection.

PROOF OF FIRST PROPOSITION

A secular priest is not, strictly speaking, in a state of perfection.

A "state of perfection," as St. Thomas shows, is not a

purely interior and invisible state, like the state of grace; but "one enters a state of perfection . . . by improving in those things which are done outwardly." " And it should be distinguished from a perfect state, like the state of grace, which can be merely interior. From this St. Thomas deduces: "A perpetual obligation, made with a certain solemnity, to observe thosé things which are of perfection is essential to the [juridical] state of perfection. Religious and bishops have both these essentials. Religious, in order to give themselves more freely to God, in which consists the perfection of this life, bind themselves by vow to abstain from certain temporal actions which they might otherwise quite lawfully use . . . Similarly, bishops in assuming the pastoral office, which implies that the pastor lay down bis life for his sheep (cf. John 10:15), bind themselves to those things which are of perfection."" St. Thomas shows, with Dionysius, that "bishops have the office of perfecters, whereas religious have the obligation of being perfected; one is active, the other passive. Thus it is clear that the state of perfection is higher in bishops than in religious."[11] Thus, theologians generally distinguish the *state for acquiring perfection* in which religious are constituted, and the *state of acquired perfection,* perfection to be exercised and communicated, which pertains to bishops.

But, as St. Thomas shows, secular priests ("parish priests and archdeacons") are not, strictly speaking, in a state of perfection:

(a) They are not, strictly speaking, in a state for acquiring perfection, because, as St. Thomas points out: "$y the reception of a sacred order, one receives the power to perform certain sacred acts; one is not thereby bound to those

things which are of perfection, except to the extent that in the Western Church tl3e reception of a sacred order (subdiaconate) implies a vow of chastity, which is one of those things pertaining to perfection. It is clear, therefore, that by the reception of a sacred order, one is not thereby placed in a state of perfection strictly so called, although interior perfection is required in order that one may worthily exercise such an order." [12]

But it can be said with C. Vivés that, by the vow of chastity, a priest of the Western Church is *secundum quid* in a state of perfection;" Suarez says that he is "in the beginning of the state of perfection."" He is forbidden to engage in business.

(b) Strictly speaking, is the secular priest in the state of perfection which is directed to the perfection of others? St. Thomas answers: "Similarly, from the point of view of the care of souls which they [priests and archdeacons] take upon themselves, they are not placed in a state of perfection. For they are not bound, by this very fact, under the obligation of a perpetual vow to retain the care of souls; they can surrender it, either by entering a religious order, even without their bishop's permission (cf. *Decret. 19, 9,* 2, 1), or may with their bishop's permission resign their archdeaconry or parish and accept a simple prebend without the care of souls, which would not be lawful if they were in a state of perfection. . . .

"Bishops, however, because they are in the state of perfection, cannot set aside their episcopal care without the permission of the Supreme Pontiff, who can alone dispense from perpetual vows, and then only for definite reasons.

It is clear, therefore, that not all prelates are in a state of perfection, but only bishops." is The secular priest, therefore, would have more merit if he became a religious-the special merit, that is, which proceeds from the vow of poverty and obedience. Thus St. Thomas shows that the religious priest who has the care of souls is by reason of his ordination and office [the care of souls] equal to the parish priest; and he is superior to him by reason of his "state"-the goodness of a [perpetual] religious state, in which the religious pledges his whole life to the pursuit of perfection. "And therefore the religious state is to the office of parish priest as a holocaust is to sacrifice-a sacrifice being less than a holocaust."

"But this comparison," says the holy Doctor, "must be understood in the light of the deed itself *(sec2cndum genus operis),* for it sometimes happens that the charity of the doer *(secundum caritatem operantis),* causes a work, in itself not so great as to become more meritorious-that is, by reason of the greater charity with which it is performed." Thus a secular priest like the saintly Curé d'Ars can be much more perfect than many religious and bishops.

"But if," adds St. Thomas, "we compare the difficulty of living well in religious life and in an office which brings with it the care of souls, the latter is more difficult on account of external dangers. And this is true even though religious life is more difficult in itself on account of the rigors of regular observance." 's St. Thomas says also: "The difficulty caused by outward obstacles sometimes lessens the perfection of virtue-for example, when one does not love the virtue sufficiently well to wish to overcome the

obstacles to the virtue. . . . Sometimes, however, it is a sign of more perfect virtue; for example, when one does not forsake virtue, although one is hindered by obstacles which are involuntary or unavoidable.'.' 1'

Thus, from the canonical point of view, *a secular priest is not, strictly speak .ing, in a state of perfection, neither the state for the acquisition of perfection nor the state of exercising it.*

Proof of second proposition

A secular priest, because of his ordination and office, should strive for perfection strictly so called. Indeed *greater interior sanctity is* required to celebrate Mass and sanctify souls than is required by a religious lay brother or nun. "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be saltedr It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men. You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13).

This conclusion may be proved in three ways: A. From the nature of priestly ordination; B. From the duties of a priest toward the sacramental body of Christ; C. From his duties toward the mystical body of Christ.

A. *Priestly ordination:* In the Roman Pontifical, in the rite for the ordination of a priest, we read: "The Lord chose seventy-two, in order to teach [us] that both in word and deed the ministers of His Church should, in faith and love, be perfect-grounded, that is, in a twofold love of God and neighbor."[18] This is evident:

(a) from what is required before ordination; (b) from its effects on the soul;

(c) from its consequences.

(a) A state of grace, suitability, and a goodness of life higher than that for entrance to religious life are required for ordination to the priesthood. St. Thomas says: "Sacred orders presuppose sanctity, but the religious state is a means of reaching sanctity. Thus the weight of orders is to be placed on a framework already seasoned by sanctiry; but the weight of religious life semons the framework, men, drawing them from the dampness of vice." [19] This doctrine is found also in St. Gregory and Dionysius (Eccl. *Hier.,* C. 5) in texts quoted by St. Thomas. According to them, says Fr. Barthier, it seems that the illuminative state is the degree of charity fitting for the reception of the priesthood, so that the priest already purified from sin may be able to illuminate others. On the other hand, to enter religious life, the purgative stage is sufficient. For the episcopacy, one should be in the unitive state, because a hishop must be already perfect and perfecting others.[Z°] In the *Supplement,* St. Thomas quotes Dionysius: "The power of a priest extends to purifying and illuminating only; the episcopal power extends to these also, but to perfecting others as well." [zi]

(bi The effects of ordination are the priestly character and sacramental grace. But the priestly character is a certain participation in the priesthood of Christ Himself; it is indelible, making one a priest forever.[ZZ] The priest, therefore, ought to live as the worthy minister of Christ. In order to do this he receives sacramental grace at ordination. For, as St. Thomas says in the *Supplement:* "The works of God are perfect. And therefore to him to whom God gives any power, He gives also that help which enables him to use that power worthily.· [ı] Just as sanctifying grace is neces-

sary in order that a man may worthily receive the sacraments, sanctifying grace is also necessary that he may worthily dispense the sacraments . . . " [z·] And in the same article we read: "To exercise an order in a fitting way, any goodness at all is not sufficient, but a surpassing goodness is required. Why? That those whom ordination has placed over others in a sacramental way may also surpass others in holiness. For the reception of an order, therefore, it is necessary to have grace sufficient for one to be worthily numbered among the ordinary faithful of Christ; but in the actual reception of an order there is given a more ample gift of grace, so that one becomes capable of doing greater things." [2'] These words of the *Supplement* are not directly from the pen of St. Thomas, but we find something similar in a work authentically his: "Those who enter the divine ministry take on a royal dignity and should be perfect in virtue." [25]These words are found also in the Pontifical.

God, in calling anyone to a higher office, gives him the means to fulfill the obligations of that office; and the priest by reason of his ordination has the right, unless he fails to merit it, to new actual graces so that he may in a fitting way exercise the duties of his priesthood. "Sacramental grace adds to ordinary habitual grace and the virtues and gifts a certain divine help to work out the effect of the sacrament." [zs] Sacramental grace is a new, intrinsic modification, a special impulse of habitual grace, with the right to receive actual help when needed. That is the teaching of John of St. Thomas, Contenson, and Billuart.

Priestly ordination is something more noble than religious profession in that it gives a certain participation in the
priesthood of Christ not given to a simple religious. The cleric declares at his ordination: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my chalice; it is You who will restore to me my inheritance."

(c) A consequence of ordination is, as we read in the Pontifical, a special obligation of striving after a higher perfection. The bishop says at the close of the ceremony: "Beloved sons, consider carefully the order which you have received and the burden which has been laid on your shoulders; strive to live in a holy and devout manner, and to please Almighty God, so that you may acquire His grace, which He, in His mercy, may deign to bestow on you." A priest should sanctify himself so that the sacramental grace of orders may always bear more fruit in him.

As we have said above, all Christians are bound, while they are in this world, to strive for greater charity. A fortiori, the priest is similarly bound, so that he may with greater perfection carry out the precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart . . ."To priests in particular Christ says: "Be you perfect," and "To him who hath it shall be given, and he shall abound" (Matt. 13:12). "You are the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (cf. Matt. 5:13-14).

Thus we read in the Imitation o f *Christ,* in the section on the priestly state: "Behold you have become a priest, consecrated in order to celebrate; see that in due course you faithfully and devoutly offer sacrifice to God, and show yourself blameless. You have not lightened your load, but you have bound yourself to a heavier one and to the chain of discipline; and you are bound to a greater perfection in charity. A priest should be adorned with every vir-

tue and he should be an example of good living to others." Thus the responsibility of a priest is very great, so much so that many saints were afraid to receive priestly ordination.

B-By *reason o fhis duties toward the sacramental body* o f *Christ* the obligation of a priest to strive after perfection becomes even more clear.

(a) The priest, when celebrating Mass, represents Christ; he is *another Christ.* Christ, however, offered Himself as victim for us. In order, therefore, for the minister to be conscious of his office, in order that he may celebrate Mass worthily and in a holy manner, lie must personally unite himself in mind and heart to the supreme priest and holiest victim. It would be hypocrisy, at least indirectly willed through negligence, if he were to approach the altar without the firm will to advance in charity. Each day he should with greater sanctity say in the name of Christ: "For this is My Body. This is the chalice of My Blood." And in each Mass the priest should receive Eucharistie Communion devoutly, so that his charity may increase more and more. Normally, therefore, each of his Eucharistic Communions should be substantially more fervent and more fruitful, because each Communion should not only preserve his charity but also increase it, thereby disposing him to receive the Body of Christ more worthily on the following day. This is true even for the simple faithful: a fortiori is it true for the priest.2!

It is not surprising, therefore, that St. Thomas says: "Interior perfection is needed for one to exercise these acts (of orders) worthily," 2gand: "Greater interior sanctity is needed for that very noble ministry in which Christ Himself is served in the sacrament of the altar, than is needed for the religious state. As Dionysius says (Eccl. *Hier.* c. 6), the monastic order should follow priestly sacred orders and like them ascend te, divine things. Thus a cleric in sacred orders would, other things being equal, sin more grievously if he should do anything against sanctity than a religious who is not in sacred orders, although the lay religious is bound to regular observances to which those in sacred orders are not bound." 211

in As far as the consecration of the Eucharist is concerned, a simple priest is not lower than a bishop.'0 And the episcopacy is not, according to St. Thomas, a special sacrament but an extension of the priesthood.

The sanctity necessary, or at least obviously fitting, for the celebration of Mass is well explained in the *Imitation* o *fChrist:* "The priest in sacred vestments represents Christ so that humbly and supplicatingly he can ask God both for himself and for all the people. He has in front of him and behind him the sign of the Lord's cross, as a continual reminder of the passion of Christ. In front, he bears the cross on his chasuble, so that he may diligently see and strive fervently to follow the footsteps of Christ. He is signed xvith the cross behind him so that he may patiently bear for God whatever unpleasant things are inflicted upon him by others."

(c) This is confirmed by the official prayer of the Church, to which clerics are bound upon becoming subdeacons. This official prayer must be said worthily, attentively, and with devotion, so as to illuminate the intellect and inflame the affection. The Divine Office accompanies

the celebration of Mass, and is, in a sense, the continuation of the prayer of Christ, just as the sacrifice of the Mass continues the sacrifice of the cross. It is the chant of the Spouse of Christ, and a conversation with Christ. According to theologians, the obligation to recite the canonical hours each day is of ecclesiastical law. But even prior to this law, a cleric is, by reason of his ecclesiastical state, bound to pray more often than a lay person; and the daily recitation of the Divine Office is something appropriate to his state. The custom of canonical prayer flourished in the Church from the time of the Apostles and is hinted at in the Epistle to the Ephesians (5:19): "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Toward the end of the fourth century, this custom of reciting daily the canonical hours seems te, have been of precept. The importance of this prayer is clear from the fact that all clerics are bound under pain of mortal sin to the recitation, in private at least, of the canonical hours. To satisfy this obligation, literal attention (to the meaning of the words) or spiritual attention (to God and what we ask for) is best, and toward this all should strive; but presupposing the intention to pray to and worship God, an intention that perseveres at least virtually, a superficial internal attention to the words is sufficient.

As the just man, therefore, lives by faith, so the priest ought to live spiritually by the celebration of Mass and the recitation of the canonical hours. The Mass should be the Thabor of the whole priestly life, from which flow the rivers of living water.

C-The duties of a priest toward the m.ystical body o f *Christ.*

These reveal, even more clearly, the obligation of striving after perfection.

By sanctifying souls, the secular priest shares in that care of seuls originally entrusted to the bishop." He must be the bishop's helper. Although the parish priest is not constituted in a state of perfection by his care of seuls, still in order to sanctify seuls he must have some perfection. The Council of Trent advised: "Nothing better instructs others in piety and the worship of God than the life and example of those who dedicate themselves to the divine ministry. ... To them, as to a mirror, others direct their gaze, and in them find a source for imitation. It is very fitting, therefore, that clerics called to the service of God should so direct their life and habits that in dress, gesture, walk, word and in everything else, they show nothing except what is serious, moderate and religious." A priest is not bound to poverty, but he should have no affection for worldly things, and he should even freely give what he has to the poor; he must be obedient to his bishop and make himself a servant of the faithful, in spite of every difficulty and even occasionally in spite of calumnies.

The need for this acquired perfection is obvious in preaching, in the direction of seuls, and in the hearing of confessions.

In order to preach the word of God effectively the priest must have a certain contemplation of divine things, as that will enable him to preach out of an abundant love for God. He needs contemplation if his work as preacher

is to accomplish its object.[32] As St. Thomas says: "That active life in which one, by preaching and teaching, gives to others the insights he has gained through contemplation . . . presupposes an abundance of contemplation." [33] In this the priest should be the true light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Similarly, a certain perfection is necessary to hear confessions, because of the dangers of this ministry and in order that the confessor may prudently, wisely; and with charity lead souls to greater purity', faith, hope, and charity. To him, also, souls may come in search of higher direction so that they may follow more faithfully' the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion. For all these reasons, the secular and diocesan priest should be more perfect than the simple religious. As St. Thomas says: "greater interior sanctity is required for the priestly office." [3]'The simple religious is bound only' to seek for perfection, but every priest is bound to have a certain perfection already. Every' priest, if he is to be faithful to the grace of his ordination, should say with St. Paul: "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls" (2 Cor. 12:15).

A practical question: Is it sufficient, in conscience, for a priest to have a firm purpose, in itself efficacious, of worthily fulfilling all the duties of the priestly life-even, if occasion demand, those which are most perfect and heroic -or must he already have a certain personal perfection?

We may answer, with Suarez and Cardinal Vives: Although some personal perfection is very fitting and morally necessary for the proper and worthy exercise of the duty to sanctify others, it is not, however, strictly neces

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sary that the priest should first have this perfection. It is sufficient that this perfection should exist in the resolution, in itself efficacious, to carry out worthily his obligations as a priest.

In other words, the priest's obligation of tending toward perfection is not distinct from the obligation of fulfilling properly his priestly obligations-just as it does not differ, in the case of a religious, from his obligation to observe his vows. Therefore, a priest only sins against this obligation of tending to perfection when he neglects the special obligations of his office.

The means for reaching this priestly perfection are meditation and mental prayer, spiritual reading, the study of Sacred Scripture with an eye to one's spiritual life, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, weekly confession, and annual retreat. All these are necessary in order that the priest may know not only the letter but the spirit of the Gospel, which he must preach from the abundance of his heart.[35] The custom of living a common life, associations of priests whose object is spiritual perfection, and membership in Third Orders are praiseworthy."

Practical Conclusion

A priest, therefore, can make a sacrifice of Iris life by celebrating Mass in the spirit of a formula suggested by St. Pius X and supplemented, with respect to the four ends of sacrifice, by Blessed Peter Eymard.

"Whatever be the kind of death Your providence has reserved for me, O Lord, I accept it with my whole heart from Your hands, with all its sorrows, penalties and anxieties, as the way of reaching You. And by this acceptance,

in union with the unbloody sacrifice of Your Son, I off er You in anticipation the personal sacrifice of my life, for the four purposes of sacrifice.

"In a spirit of *adoration* of Your Majesty, O Lord of life and death, who brings one to the extremity of death and leads one back to eternal life.

"In a spirit of *reparation,* for al] my sins, hidden and known, and for the punishment due to them.

"In a spirit of *supplication,* to obtain all the graces useful for my salvation and for the apostolate, especially final perseverance which is the grace of graces.

"In a spirit of *thanksgiving* for benefits received, for the Incarnation, Redemption, Eucharist, my Christian and priestly vocation, so that my death may be the beginning of eternal thanksgiving."

In order that this sacrifice may be more perfect, and that it may be a preparation for the supreme sacrifice at the moment of death, a priest should ask for the following graces:

"Lord, grant that I may realize what my Christian and priestly vocation demands of me, somewhat in the way in which I shall see it immediately after my death, in the particular judgment. In Your mercy, grant me the grace to fulfill with love whatever You expect of me for the salvation of those souls whom I ought ta help, and to suffer with generosity whatever sorrow You have permitted from eternity for my sanctification before I eventually reach You in heaven.

"I ask, in particular, that I may work with zeal for the salvation of all those souls whom, in accordance with Your will, 1 ought to help. For that purpose 1 join the personal

sacrifice of my life with the unbloody sacrifice of Your Son, superabundant and of infinite value, and with the immense merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen."

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. See Cardinal Mercier, La vie *intérieure, appel aux âmes sacerdotales,* p. 163, for this first opinion. He writes: "Religious, in love with their Order or Congregation, do not always appreciate properly other Orders or the place of the 'secular' clergy in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. A venerable priest once said to me: They have more compassion for us than esteem.' Religious should not say, almost emphatically: 'But *we* have the sense of Christ.' Not only should they avoid egoism, but they should avoid also any exaggerated *esprit de corps."*
2. Dom Gréa, *L'Eglise,* livre iv, c. 12.

3. Mercier, op. cit., p. 155. i 4. Text quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 8.
See Mercier, op. cit., p. 192.

5. S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 8, 6th objection. 6. *Ibid.,* ad 6.
7. See *Ibid.,* a. *6.* 8. See *Ibid.,* a. 8. 9. *Ibid.,* a. 4, ad 1. 70.
Ibid., a. 5.
77. *Ibid.,* a. 7. 12. *Ibid.,* a. 6. 13. Vivès, *Theologia* Ascetica, pp. 60, 74.

14. Suarez, De Virtute et Statu Religionis, bk. 1, c. 17, n. 4. 15. S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 6.
16. *Ibid.,* a. 8. 17. *Ibid.,* ad 6. 18. See St. Thomas, IV Sent., d. 24, q. 2; Mercier, op cit. pp. 140, 167, 200.
19. S.T., Suppl., q. 36, a. 1 and 3; 2-2, q. 189, a. 1, ad 3. 20. See *Ibid.,* 2-2, q. 184, a. 7 and 8.
21. *Ibid., Suppl.,* q. 36, a. 1.

22. See *Ibid.,* q. 35, a. 2; 3, q. 63, a. 3. 23. *Ibid.,* Suppl., q. 35, a. 1.
24. *Ibid.,* ad 3.

25. St. Thomas Aquinas, IV *Sent.,* d. 24, q. 2. 26. S.T., 3, q. 62, a. 2.
27. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Hebr.* 10:25. 28. S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 6.
29. *Ibid.,* a. 8.

30. Sec *Ibid., Suppl.* q. 40, a. 4 and 5. 31. See *Ibid.,* 2-2, q. 184, a. 6, ad 3. 32. See Mercier, op. cit., pp. 196, 217. 33. ST., 3, q. 40, a. 1, ad 2.

34. *Ibid., 2-2,* q. 184, a. 8.

35. See Pius XI, Encyclical of December 20, 1935: *Ad* Catholici Sacerdotio.

36. Those interested in the ascetical life of a priest should read Cardinal Bona's excellent treatise, De Sacrificio Missae, pp. 28, 75, 179, 325, 326, 402.

CHAPTER 7

The Episcopal State

Fullness of the priesthood

This question is of importance, not only in itself but also in its relation to other questions. From a consideration of episcopal perfection, several authors determine what ought to be the perfection of a priest, and what is needed for perfection in general. But if these authors have not a correct notion of episcopal perfection, they cannot accurately solve these other questions.'

Is the episcopate an order distinct from the priesthood I and a distinct sacrament, giving a distinct character? Or is it an extension of the priesthood and its most perfect complement? Some (St. Robert Bellarmme, for example) say that the episcopate is a distinct sacrament. Others (St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great, Scotus) say: It is only an extension and complement of the priesthood. St. Thomas presents the following arguments:

(a) The Sacrament of Orders is intended principally for the consecration of the Eucharist, for the Sacrifice of the Mass.2 But as far as the consecration of the Eucharist is concerned, a bishop or even the Supreme Pontiff himself has not greater power than that of a priest. Nothing is greater among the sacraments and in divine worship than

the consecration of the Eucharist, because the Eucharist is the end of the other sacraments, in that it contains the Author of grace.

(b) The episcopacy adds to the simple priesthood the power of ordaining, confirming, and governing a diocese. Thus the episcopacy, in what it adds to the simple priesthood, very probably is not an order distinct from the priesthood, but is its extension and most perfect complement. By divine institution, tlierefore, the bishop is superior te, priests as such-not merely in jurisdiction but also in the power of orders, because a bishop can ordain and confirm.

This is confirmed by the Council of Trent, for in its list of orders it naines only seven, and omits the episcopacy.3 Moreover, lie who is not a priest cannot validly become a bishop; on the other hand, lie who has not validly received the diaconate, but only the subdiaconate, can validly be made a priest.

Objection. An objection may be raised that episcopal consecration must give a special character because it gives special spiritual power of ordaining and confirming.

Answer. For this special power, it is sufficient that the episcopacy should be an intrinsic complement of die Sacrament of Orders. Thus, by episcopal consecration, a special character is not conferred, but the priestly character is extended m a real and physical way te, higher functions, just as in the ordination of a priest the priestly character of consecrating is extended to the power of absolving by the words: "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven."

In order to confer grace, it is sufficient that the episcopacy should be (like sacramental penance after absolu

tion) the intrinsic complement of the priesthood. Very probably the episcopacy is not an Order strictly so called, nor a sacrament distinct from the priesthood, but the fullness of the priesthood.

Episcopal consecration not only extends the priestly character to new functions: ordaining, confirming, consecrating churches and chalices, ruling a diocese; it gives also a notable increase of the sacramental grace of Order. This is necessary that the bishop may fulfill his functions not only validly but worthily and with ever greater worthiness; this sacramental grace is a permanent modality of habitual grace, giving the right to ever new and higher actual graces, so that the bishop may always better and more worthily exercise his powers.

Thus lie should live more and more in that sacramental grace, so that it may grow to completion in him; without this lie cannot be perfect. This grace, therefore, is simultaneously personal and social, just like capital grace in Christ. As does charity, it perfects the person himself and his relation with his neighbor. A bishop receives at least five talents which must increase and multiply. The episcopacy, therefore, is truly the plenitude of the priesthood. Episcopal perfection can only be reached by aspiring to greater unity with Christ and with the whole Christian episcopacy under the direction of the Supreme Pontiff in the mystical body of Christ. This unity of the episcopacy is its strength.

The bishop ought to hope for all things from the reception of sacramental grace, by cooperating with it. He will in this way become more and more conscious of the majesty of Christ's priesthood. The bishop is simultaneously,

as the successor of the Apostles, a teacher, the pastor of his flock, and a leader who rules his diocese or his church. He has, therefore, the three powers of teaching, sanctifying, ruling; and he must in case of persecution give his life for the defense of his flock.

2. *State of perfection*

Let us sec (1) on what points theologians agree, and (2) on what points they disagree about the perfection required in a bishop.

The common teaching of theologians, among them St. Thomas,[4] is clear on two points: (a) Bishops are really in a state of perfection. This state requires a perpetual obligation, made with some solemnity, to observe those things which are of perfection. But when bishops assume their pastoral office, which implies that the pastor lay clown his life for his sheep; they bind themselves to those things which are of perfection. In addition to this profession there is also a solemn consecration, (b) It is certain that the episcopal state is more perfect than the religious. St. Thomas writes: "In the order of perfection . . . bishops are in the position of perfecters, whereas religious are in the position of being perfected themselves; the former is active, the latter passive." [5] Passerini says that according te, St. Thomas the episcopal state is the active state of those who perfect others, but the religious state is the passive state of those who are being perfected themselves.s The bishop ordains priests and governs his Rock. And, as St. Thomas says,' a bishop "would be taking a backward step" if he wanted to enter a religious order while he was still useful to his flock.

These two conclusions are generally admitted by all. But there is a dispute about one point: The episcopal state is not only a state for the perfection of others, but should it not be called also *a state for the exercise of perfection* in this sense that it essentially presupposes that *perfection has been already acquired,* already in fact possessed? In other words: Is the bishop supposed to be already perfectperfect in the strict and not merely in the broad sense of the word?

There are two opposing opinions:

(a) *The first opinion is held by Suarez* and several others. They answer in the affirmative, and say that a bishop is bound to possess and to exercise perfection. Why? Because the episcopal state is greater than the religious state, which is only a state for acquiring perfection. A bishop should not only purify and illuminate others; he should also lead them to perfection.

St. Thomas, however, does not say exactly that a bishop is in the state of perfection which we may call "already acquired," and "to be exercised." He says ethat he is in the active state of one who perfects others, holding, as it were, a professorship of perfection, and that "the episcopal state is not directed te,

the attainment of perfection but rather to the end that, in virtue of the perfection which he has already acquired, he may govern others." 9

(b) *A second theory is held by Passerini* and several others.1° They answer, no: the episcopal state does not demand that one should be already perfect, in the strict meaning of the word, but that one should have the intention of reaching this perfection.

The reason is simple. Were the first position true, the high idea of perfection, strictly so-called, which excludes all deliberate venial sins and deliberate imperfections, would have to be lowered; or else it would be difficult to find bishops to satisfy this condition."

Passerini even rejects the distinction between a state for acquiring perfection and a state for exercising perfectionat least in the sense in which Suarez used these terms.

Why? Because, says Passerini, either we are speaking of *ordinary perfection,* in a less exact sense of the word, which excludes mortal sins-and in this case, every state is for the exercise of perfection; or else we are speaking of *perfection in the strict sense of the word,* which excludes all deliberate venial sins-and in this case a bishop is not bound to possess it already, because there are few who have reached it.

Passerini adds: "A bishop who is not perfect, indeed, even an evil one, does not cease to be in a state of perfection," just as a bad religious does not cease to be in the religious state. On the other hand, religious who are engaged in the apostolic life exercise or communicate perfection.

This question, as it has been put here, is of some importance in ascetical and mystical theology in determining what exactly is necessary for perfection in the strict sense of the word. Some-Suarez, for example-do not seem to have a very high conception of this perfection; for Suarez it does not require great charity. And among several arguments for proving their thesis they say: bishops are in the state of perfection which has been acquired and is to be exercised, and they fulfill their obligations. Passerini, on the other hand, seems to have a higher conception of perfection in the strict sense of the word.

3. *Clarifying the issue*

The solution will appear more cléarly if we put the question this wav: Is it sufficient that a bishop should have a firm and efficacious intention of worthily fulfilling all the duties of his office, even those which demand heroism should the need ever arise; or is he also bound in conscience to be already perfect in the strict meaning of the word?

Our solution of the problem is based on a distinction between that perfection required in conscience before accepting the episcopacy and a higher and very appropriate perfection toward which a bishop should strive."

Our thesis, which agrees with Passerini's, may be stated in this way: (A) Before accepting the episcopate, one is not bound in conscience to be already strictly perfect; (B) A bishop, however, by reason of his office and state is more strictly bound than a religious to strive for perfection, and by holier means; (C) Moreover, it is very fitting and appropriate, in order that he may worthily fulfill all the duties of his pastoral office, that he should already be perfect in the strict meaning of the word.

(A) **Before accepting the episcopacy, one is not bound in conscience to be already strictly perfect.**

It is sufficient that the bishop-elect have an efficacious intention of worthily fulfilling all the duties of the epis-

copal life, even those which are most perfect, and if the occasion arises, those which call for heroism.

We find this teaching in St. Thomas, where he is answering this objection: "There are many prelates [bishops, as is clear from the text] and religious who have not the interior perfection of

charity. If, therefore, all religious and prelates are in the state of perfection, it follows that all of them who are not perfect are in mortal sin, because they are deceivers and liars."-St. Thomas answers, both for bishops and for religious: "Men enter the state of perfection because they profess, not that they are perfect, but *that they will strive for perfection.* St. Paul, therefore, says in his Epistle to the Philippians (3:12): 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend.'And further on (3:15) he adds: 'Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.' A man, therefore, who takes up the state of perfection is not guilty of lying or deceit through not being perfect, but through revoking the intention of reaching perfection." Is

A bishop, therefore, is not bound in conscience to be already perfect, in the strict sense of the word. Such perfection can be equated with the perfection of charity, implying that one clings always to God and always acts deliberately from charity, by rooting out deliberate venial sins and voluntary imperfections. In the Epistle to the Hebrews (5:2-3) there is this reference to a bishop: "Because he himself also is compassed with infirmity, and therefore he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins."

Passerini, therefore, is correct.-We find a confirmation of this first part of our thesis in the teaching of St. Thomas. "Whether he that is appointed to the episcopate ought to be better than others?" In his reply, St. Thomas quotes the *Decretals:* "It is sufficient to choose a good man, and it is not necessary to choose the better man." And in explanation he says: "He who has to choose or appoint one as a bishop is not bound to select one who is best in himself, that is, according to charity, but one who is best for governing the Church, that is, one who is able to instruct, defend and govern the Church peacefully. . . . On the part of the person appointed, it is not necessary that he should consider himself better than others; this would be proud and presumptuous, but it is sufôcient that he should see nothing in himself which would make it unlawful for him to take up office as prelate."'S

St. Thomas also says: "There is nothing to prevent one who does not excel in the grace of holiness from being more suited to the office of governing"'s-as St. Paul says (I Cor. 12:4-6): "There are diversities of graces . . . of ministries ... of operations."

(B) A bishop, however, by reason of his office and state, is more strictly obliged than a religious ta strive for perfection strictly so called; and he is bound ta use holier means."

Perfection consists in the perfect observance of the precept of charity, a precept which bas no limitations. A bishop, therefore, like a religious, should aim at perfection, which, as a final cause, has no limitations. From this point of view, as Passerini has well said, there is no distinction to be made in states of perfection. But:

(a) A bishop has a *greater obligation* than a religious of striving for perfection. Why? Because the duties of his pastoral office demand a greater interior sanctity, if the bishop is not to hinder the salvation of his flock and the sanctification of their souls. This obligation is even greater for a bishop than it is for a religious who is engaged in the apostolic life. There are two reasons for this: the bishop's care of his flock is primary and more universal, and he cannot set it aside; moreover, he is the supreme and principal teacher and minister of orders. As St. Peter says (I Pet. 5:3), he is the "pattern" of his Rock. A bishop, therefore, would sin more grievously than a religious if he acts against perfection.

(b) States differ by reason of *the means* which are used to reach perfection; and in this the episcopacy excels. For among those works which are of counsel, some are more perfect of their very nature. Among these is that care of souls which is so great that one pours out one's life to achieve it. A bishop is bound to this in virtue of his state, and this means of reaching perfection is in itself superior to the exercise of religious obedience and poverty. Charity toward one's neighbor is the greatest efFect of **the love of God and the** greatest sign of progress in charity toward God. "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34); fraternal charity is the thermometer of the interior life.

As Passerini says:[18] "To have the principal care of souls, and to join with it a contempt of the goods of the body, one's own reputation and life, is a state which far surpasses all others in perfection; and it is for this reason that a bishop is in a state more perfect than that of any religious xvhatsoever." And he adds:[19] "This, indeed, is
the mind of St. Thomas, who proves that the episcopal state is more perfect than the religious state, not because bishops are actually perfect, but because they are more perfect in that their duty of perfecting others is certainly in itself and of its very nature sublime and more excellent than poverty, virginity and obedience; and it is a more effective means of reaching perfection. In no other state, as the Martyrology proves, are so many saints to be found."

An Objection: But religious, because of their poverty and obedience, seem to be more perfect.[20]

Answer: Although a bishop is not bound to use poverty as a means for reaching perfection, yet "bishops especially are bound to despise all things for the honor of God and the spiritual welfare of their flock when it is necessary for them to do so, either by giving to the poor of their flock or by suffering, with joy being stripped of their goods." And St. Thomas says: "Poverty is not perfection, but a means to perfection; and it does not follow that where there is greater poverty there is greater perfection. The highest perfection, indeed, is compatible with great wealth." [21]

And even though a bishop has not a vow of obedience, he is bound to give an outstanding example of obedience to the Pope, and to be in a sense a servant of the servants of God. This is often more difficult and more severe than religious obedience.

Passerini asks: "Is the episcopal state superior to the religious state joined to the apostolic life as practiced by members of the Order of Preachers, for example, or the Society of Tesus, who are engaged in the apostolate even with great personal danger to life, as on the missions? Is a

bishop superior to doctors in theology,[23] who teach many other priests? Is he superior to regular-prelates who have office for life, like Abbots and Generals who have charge of an entire Order and who have besides the burden of the care of souls the burden of the vows and regular observance?

With Passerini, we may answer this question as follows: The immediate purpose and object of the episcopal state is far superior to the purpose of the religious state, even when the latter binds itself to works of charity, and this is true for three reasons:

(a) *A more universal sphere of action:* Only a bishop can confer all the sacraments, consecrate churches and oils used in the Sacraments of Baptism and Extreme Unction; only he has a vote in defining truths of faith; and in virtue of his office he may be called in Council to discuss those things which concern the ruling of the Church. These things are not within the province of religious.

(b) *In their manner of acting:* Religious, in their care of souls, are the assistants of the bishop.

(c) *A more serious obligation:* Religious have not the same obligation as bishops of giving their lives for the spiritual welfare of the faithful.
and govern them; he is the father of the faithful of his diocese, no matter what their standing may be; *even exempt religious are his sons.* Moreover, he frequently has to make heroic acts of virtue in order to safeguard the spiritual salvation of his flock, and he must be prepared to endure even greater and more difficult things for them. In order to fulfill all these duties worthily, it will be very helpful for him to give himself to prayer, so that he may live deeply by faith and charity and speak to his flock from the abundance of holy love. (Witness the lives of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus.)
It is not necessary that a bishop should surpass everybody in all things: otherwise a man without the virtue of virginity could never become a bishop. He should, however, excel in those things which affect the ruling of his flock. That is why it is fitting that only one who is perfect should be made a bishop.

Understood in this way, our thesis does not lower our exalted idea of perfection strictly so called, nor is it derogatory to the episcopal state. And this appears to be the teaching of St. Thomas.

4. Some practical questions

(C) In order that a bishop may worthily and conscientiously fulfill ail the duties of his pastoral office, it is very fitting and helpful that he should be already perfect, in the strict meaning of the word (cf. 2 Tim. 1:3-14).

A bishop must not only purify and illuminate others, but he must also lead them to perfection. He must direct priests

Is it lawful ta desire the office of the bishop? = '

It seems that it is lawful, because St. Paul says in his first Epistle to Timothy (3:1): "If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." It is lawful and praiseworthy to desire a good work.

St. Augustine says, however, that it is "unbecoming to desire" the episcopal office A'As to lawfulness, some authors

equate this desire with the desire for contemplation and mystical union.

Let us see how St. Thomas answers this question. He says that to desire the episcopal state because of its high dignity or honor is unlawful; but to desire it in order to do good to one's neighbor is in itself praiseworthy and virtuous. This was particularly true in the early Church in times of persecutions, because bishops often had to endure very great sufferings. But because the episcopacy is a very exalted dignity, unless there is an urgent reason, it seems presumptuous for one to desire the office of a bishop. That is why some take a vow not to accept the episcopal office except *under* obedience or unless chanty makes it necessary.

One can, however, without presumption desire the office of a bishop if "the object of bis desire is the good work and not the first place in dignity."

This desire is not of the same kind as the desire for mystical union, because there is no very great external dignity connected necessarily with this union; on the contrary, it usually involves a very painful purification.

Would it be lawful ta refuse absolutely an appointment ta the episcopate?

St. Thomas answers that it would not be lawful: "Just as it is a sign of an inordinate will that a man of bis own choice should seek to be appointed to rule over others, so too is it a sign of an inordinate will if in direct opposition to the will of bis superiors he definitely refuses this office of governing others. The reasons are: it is opposed to the love which one should have for one's neighbor, for whose good one should offer oneself as place and time demand,

and secondly, it is contrary to humility by which a man submits himself to the orders of bis Superiors." fl

May a bishop give up his episcopal office in order to enter a religious order? æ

He can do so only with the permission of the Supreme DI ontiff, and the reason must be that he can no longer work for the salvation of bis subjects-either because of bis age, for example, or bis infirmity, or because of some scandal or defection among bis subjects.

Why? "The perfection of the episcopal state requires that a man binds himself, for the love of God, to work for the salvation of bis neighbor. He is bound, therefore, to retain this pastoral care as long as he is able to procure the spiritual welfare of those who have been entrusted to him. He ought not to neglect this, either for the quiet of divine contemplation, or to avoid any hardship, or to acquire any gain whatsoever." zeMoreover: "So long as a bishop can be useful to the salvation of bis neighbor, he would be backsliding if he wished to enter the religious state to busy himself only with bis own salvation.'"0

Therefore, as St. Thomas says, in a time of persecution, "when the salvation of bis subjects demands the personal presence of the pastor, the pastor should not withdraw himself personally from

bis flock, either because of some temporal advantage, or because of some danger threatening bis person. The good shepherd is bound to lay down bis life for bis sheep." 3'

5. *Priestly m.inistry in the world today*

Christ said to His Apostles (Matt. 10:16-17): "Behold 1 send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore

wise as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues." And in Luke (10:3) He says: "Behold I send you as lambs among wolves."

Similarly in the first Epistle of St. John (5:19) we are told what is the spirit of the world as opposed to the spirit of Christ: "the whole world is seated in wickedness"; and: "for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (2:16).

St. Paul says (Eph. 6:11-13) : "Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness m the high places. Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect."

In his commentary on Matthew, St. Thomas says: "Why did God in this way wish to send the Apostles into danger? He did so in order to show His power, because if He had sent armed men, their success would be attributed to their violence and not to the power of God. Therefore, He sent poor men. It was a great thing that through poor, depised, and unarmed men, so many were converted to the Lord." 92

In his commentary on Ephesians, St. Thomas notes that the principal weapons against the wickedness of the devil are the three theological virtues: the shield of *faith,* the *hope* of reaching our final goal, which is like the helmet of salvation, and the *love* of God and of souls which is connected with humility and the spirit of adoration."

But I would like to speak particularly of the corruption of the world which we have to evangelize, a world influenced by almost twenty centuries of Christianity. Today, for very many, the great ideals of Christianity have been lowered and they have taken on a completely different meaning. Many, like Chesterton,3' have spoken about *great ideas gone mad.* This began particularly with jean Jacques Rousseau, whose teaching has rightly been called *Christianity corrupted.* 'S The worst corruption is that of the best.

In classical antiquity, there was indeed a great opposition between the spiritualism of Plato and Aristotle and the materialism of Epicurus. But the mind had not yet reached the heights of Christianity, and the more penetrating philosophers spoke only of wisdom or of some rational love of the Supreme Good; the Stoics spoke about a universal fraternity among all men.

With the coming of Christianity, the human mind was raised to a supernatural life, with a very certain faith in God, a very strong hope in Him, and with charity toward the heavenly Father and toward all His adopted sons. For three centuries, martyrs died for the Christian faith, and the blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians. The teaching of the Fathers was brought to its perfection by St. Augustine. Sacred theology reached its peak in the 13th century.

Then, in the 14th century, a decline began with the rise of Nominalism, and in the 15th and 16th centuries with Protestantism, the rejection of the infallibility of the Church, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacrament of Penance and the need for good works. This decline became more rapid among the unbelieving philosophers of the 1 8th

century. Voltaire and Rousseau, with the French Revolution and its spirit of naturalism as interpreted by the deists, maintained: God, if He exists, does not care about individuals but only about universal laws. As a result sin is not an offense against God but against a constantly evolving reason. What

previously seemed to us to be theft is no longer theft; perhaps individual property is itself a theft, as the socialists say.

The spirit of naturalism and rationalism denies all the supernatural mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, and rejects the Eucharist and other sacraments. It denies the life of grace, which is the seed of glory, eternal life; it also denies the opposition between heaven and hell.

At one time, liberalism wished to remain suspended halfway in this fall from Catholicism to serious error. But liberalism reached no conclusions; it did not affirm or deny, but fluctuated. And so when a decision has to be taken and one must act, liberalism gives way to radicalism, then to socialism and finally to materialistic communism which denies property, the family, the fatherland and religion.

We still have the remnants of an ideology, which began with J. J. Rousseau and in which we find a corrupted version of Christianity in keeping with the spirit of naturalism. It denies all the supernatural mysteries. And instead of faith in God, hope in God and charity toward God we have a faith in humanity, a hope in humanity, a love of humanity. Humanity is deified and takes the place of God. They always speak, therefore, about the progress of humanity, as if a scientific, economic, moral and spiritual progress were always taking place, as if humanity of itself, without any higher help, was causing this progress.

But we have seen in the recent \\ orld War, along with material progress in knowledge and the means of destruction, a frightful moral collapse, economic decline and misery.

And so this new ideology which has been given the place of Christian faith is composed of great ideals gone mad. Like the increasing speed of a falling stone, this fall is deeper and swifter because it began at a greater height.

The present position, therefore, is worse than that before the time of Christ. It is not the ignorance of a child, but the madness of an old, and at one time very cultured, man. It is not surprising, therefore, that modern philosophers like Kant, Fichte and Hegel, whose way of thinking was rationalistic, have been great intellectual monstrosities. This movement had already begun with Spinoza who denied the freedom of God, creation, providence, the justice of God and His mercy, all merit and demerit.

This is the foolishness and the madness of which St. Paul spoke (1 Cor. 3:19): "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Wisdom judges everything-even the smallest things-both speculatively and practically, in view of the highest cause and ultimate end; but foolishness or madness judges everything, even the highest thing, by that which is lowest, and in the place of God it puts the concupiscence of the flesh and of the eyes, or the pride of life.38

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. See 2 Tim. 1:3-14; Council of Trent, sess. 23, c. 4, 6, 7; *Pontificale Pomanum:* consecratio episcopalis; St. Thomas Aquinas, S.T., 2-2, q. 184 articles 4,5,7,8; q. 185, a. 8: q. 186, a. 3. ad 6; q. 188, a. 1, ad 3; Passerini, De *Statibu.t Hominum* (commentary on 2-2, q. 184 articles 5 to 7), p. 73: Suarez. *Oe Statu Perfectionis, Uh. /*, c. 15 and 16.

2. See S.T., Suppl,, q. 37, aa. 2 and 4. 3, See Denzinger, 958.

4. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a, 5. 5. *Ibid.,* a. 7.

6. Passerini, op. cit., p. 72, n. 10. 7. S.T., 2-2, q. 185, a. 4, ad 1. 8. *Ibid.,* a. 8.

9. *Ibid.,* q. 186, a. 3, ad 5.

10. Passerini, op *cit., pp.* 70, 73.

11. See Passerini, op. *cit., p.* 7\ n. 18. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "The state of perfection is twofold, that of prelates and that of religious. But the term is used equivocally, because the reli gious state is for the acquisition of perfection, whereas the state of being a prelate is not for the acquisition of perfection for oneself, but for communicating it, already acquired, to others" (In *Matt.* 19:21). A bishop is to a religious as a teacher is to pupil.

It is said that St. Thomas was once asked: "Who should be elected Master-General?" His answer was: "He who is more prudent should be elected Superior; he who is more learned should teach us; he who is more holy should pray for us."

12. Passerini, op. *cit., p.* 72, n. 15.

13. See St. Thomas Aquinas, In *Matt.,* 19:21. 14. S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 5, ad 2.
15. *Ibid.,* q. 185, a. 3. 16. *Ibid.,* ad 3.
17. See Passerini, op. cit., a. 3, ad 2, writes: "A to be more excellent holiness."
18. Passerini, op. *cit., p.* 93, summary number 6. 19. *Ibid., p.* 94.
20. See S.T., 2-2, q. 184, a. 7, ad 1. 21. *Ibid., q.* 185, a. 6, ad 1.
22. Passerini, op. *cit., p.* 95.

23. With reference to doctors in theology, St. Thomas says that they, next to bishops, "are like the principal master-workmen who examine and teach how others ought to work out die salvation of their souls. In itselF, therefore, it is better and more meritorious to teach sacred doctrine, if it is done with
p. 74. St. Thomas, S.T., 2-2 q. 185, bishop should aim at showing himself than others in both knowledge and a good intention, than to look after die salvation of this or that particular soul, as the Apostle says, 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel' (I Cor. *1:17)" (Ouod. L,* a. 14).
24. See S.T., 2-2, q. 185, a. I.

25. St. Augustine, *The City of God, XIX,* 19. 26. See S.T., 2-2, q. 185, a. 4.
27. *Ibid.,* a. 2.

28. See *Ibid.,* a. 4. 29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.,* ad 1. 31. *Ibid., a. 6. 32. St. Thomas* Aquinas. In *Matt.* 10:16. 33. St. Thomas Aquinas, In *Eph.* 6:12. 34. G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics.*
35. Jacques Maritain, *Three Reformers.* 36. See S.T., 2-2, q. 46, *"De Stultitia. "*

CHAPTER 8

The Beatitudes Measure Priestly Perfection

In ascetical books, Christian perfection is often discussed in an exceedingly dry and abstract maimer. About all we find is an enumeration of the virtues which it requires and an insistence on the perfection of charity. But what dris perfection of charity consists in. and how it differs from the ehariry of begimrers and those who are more proficient, is not shown in a sufficiently concrete and vivid way.

The greatness and majesty of Christian perfection will appear in a very concrete and living way if we bear in mind the first sermon of our divine Lord on the beatitudes (Matt. 5 and Luke 6D.

At the outset Christ begins to speak of happiness, because all men naturally desire to be happy; but they often wander aimlessly, seeking this happiness where it is not to be found -in sensible pleasures, in riches, in honors, in power, and are easily deceived by the concupiscence of the flesh, by the concupiscence of the eyes, and by the pride of life. Christ, on the other hand, shows where true happiness is to be found, in its beginning in this life and in its perfection after death.

Similarly, St. Thomas begins his exposition of moral theology with his tract on man's final end and happiness, because the end is first in the order of intention, although last in the order of execution.

Spiritual theology must insist on the greatness of Christian perfection, by describing it not only theoretically and in the abstract but in a concrete and living way, in the very words of our Lord. Such a method will show how intimately contemplation on the mysteries of faith and intimate union with God belong to Christian perfection, and will clearly distinguish Christian perfection from the charity of beginners and the more advanced.

This is particularly necessary when we are considering the perfection toward which a priest, as distinct from the ordinary faithful, should strive.

St. Augustine has given us an interesting and illuminating insight in his work, T *he Ï.Ol'd's Sermon on the Mount.* There he notes that in St. Luke's Gospel (6:20) four beatitudes are mentioned, and eight in St. Matthew's Gospel (5). There are four beatitudes missing in St. Luke's Gospel-blessed are the meek, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers.

St. Augustine remarks: "Jesus first ascended the mountain and made this address to His disciples. Afterwards, when He had come down. He found that a crowd had gathered, and He preached to them also, recapitulating many things which He had said."

It seems, therefore, that this sermon in its depth and fullness was directed to the Apostles and is consequently of special value for priests.

In each beatitude our Lord mentions the meritorious act and its reward-beginning in this life and perfected after death. These meritorious acts, according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, are acts of perfect virtues, performed with the aid of the gifts-an act of the virtue of fortitude, for example, aided by the gift of fortitude, the virtue of meekness aided by the gift of piety, of prudence aided by the gift of counsel-the initial reward already points to a union with God which shall later be consummated in heaven. There is no way more concrete, therefore, to describe Christian perfection toward which priests particularly should strive so that they may be able to guide the faithful toward it.

Blessed are they who suffer persecution **All the gifts and perfect virtues**

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An approach to good

Blessed are the	**Gift of wisdom peacemakers**
Blessed are the. clean	**Gift of understanding of heart**
Blessed are the	**Gift of counsel merciful**
Blessed are they who after justice	**Gift of fortitude hunger and thirst**
Blessed are they who	**Gift of knowledge weep**
Blessed are the meek	**Gift of piety**
Blessed are the poor	**Gift of fear.**

St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, explains these eight beatitudes in his commentary on St. Matthew and in the *Summa (1-2,* q. 69).

Both Matthew and Luke list the beatitudes in an

A drawing away from evil

ascending order, beginning with the beatitude of poverty and rising to the beatitude of those who suffer persecution. In Isaias (11:2), however, the list descends from the supreme gift of wisdom to the lowest, the gift of fear.

Similarly, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer begin with the higher ones: from "Hallowed be Thy name" to "But deliver us from evil." St. Augustine calls this to our attention in order to make more obvious the correlation between the beatitudes and the gifts.

St. Thomas points out that, in ascending order, the first three beatitudes imply a drawing away from evil (blessed are the poor, the meek, and those who weep); the others imply an approach to what is good and best. Among these the beatitudes of the active life are first listed: "blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice" and "blessed are the merciful." The beatitudes of the contemplative life come next: "blessed are the clean of heart" and "blessed are the peacemakers." Finally, there is the chief beatitude, "blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake." It is the summit of Christian perfection and is most strikingly shown by martyrs.

St. Thomas presents an excellent exposition of these eight steps on the road to perfection both in his commentar;· on St. Matthew's Gospel and in the Summa.'

While the world says: "Happiness consist in an abundance of material goods, sense pleasure, and honors," Jesus says: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* This beatitude proceeds from humility and from the gift of fear, and it is opposed to greed, jealousy, and the pride of life. All who aspire to perfection must aim at a spirit of evangelical poverty. If they have riches, they should
likewise possess a spirit of mortification; particularly is this true of priests. One can have perfect charity without the effective practice of the counsels, but never without their spirit.

Similarly, while the world says: "Happy are those who have power over others," Jesus says: *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.* In other words, blessed are they who do not become angry, who do not seek revenge against their opponents, or power over others, but poxver over their own irascible passions so that their soul may beeome entirely peaceful. This beatitude springs from meekness and the gift of piety, because this gift makes us consider God as a father, and men as brothers whom we must regard with gentleness.

Similarly, while the world says: "Happy are those who find consolation in luxuries or in vanities," Jesus says: *Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* In other words, blessed are they who weep over their own sins and realize that the only true evil is mortal sin, the death of the soul. These find a consolation which is infinitely superior to the delights of the world. They use their concupiscible appetites very moderately in a spirit of penance and in the light of the gift of knowledge by which they realize the vanity of earthly things and the gravity of sin (cf. 2-2, q. 9, a. 4). Knowledge is an understanding of things, not in the light of their first cause, but through dependent and deficient secondary causes. The priest must be penitent and must welcome penitents, moving them to a true and lasting sorrow for their sins.

The first three beatitudes imply a drawing away from evil, as in the purgative way. The two following ones imply

an approach to good and they are part of the active life; they are in the proficient stage.

Pride says: "Happy is he who lives and acts just as he pleases, who is subject to nobody, who is in charge of others and dominates over them." Jesus says, on the contrary, *Blessed are they who hunger and thrist after justice, for they shall have their* fill. According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, this beatitude coresponds to the gift of fortitude, which helps us overcome dif%culties and keeps alive in us, for the duration of our lives, a burning love for justice and perfection. As we grow older we see that hunger and thirst after justice are not merely a warm feeling or a burning of the soul which soon passes away and is conquered.

But the love of justice ought to be united, as it is in God, to a love of mercy. And so another beatitude follows immediately: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* In other words, blessed are they who do not oppress those who are subject to them, and who are good counsellors to those who are in trouble; to them God will be merciful. This beatitude, according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, corresponds to the gift of counsel, because mercy inclines one to give good counsel to those who are in trouble, and when the mind hesitates between the path of justice and the path of mercy, the Holy Spirit inclines it to mercy by which the sinner is helped to return to justice.

The sixth and seventh beatitudes are connected with the contemplative life. St. Luke does not mention them; and very probably they were preached not to the people, but to the disciples.

While many philosophers were saying that happiness
consists in speculating about truth and were caring very little about purity of heart, Jesus said: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* In other words, by heart-to-heart talk with God they already receive in this life an understanding of divine things, a contemplation of the mysteries of salvation, which enables them to preach out of the abundance of the heart. According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, this beatitude of cleanliness of heart corresponds to the gift of understanding, which allows us to penetrate divine things. In this way, living Faith becomes penetrating; it understands mysteries and in particular the superiority of the last end compared with

other ends: how God, infinite Love, is immensely superior to the objects of concupiscence and pride. This is the contemplation which was the source of the Apostles' fruitful preaching.

Then: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.* These are the truly wise and happy, not because they are peacemakers in a human way, but because they see ail things in relation to God. They worry not, but find true peace, preserve it and communicate it to others who are worried. This peace is the tranquility of order which springs from the gift of wisdom, because this gift connaturally judges everything in relation to God. By it we know, almost by experiencing it, that evil comes only because it is permitted by God for a greater good. Peace is thus preserved, and these peacemakers reconcile men who are divided among themselves. They are makers of peace, like great pastors or bishops.[2]

Finally, the eighth beatitude is the most perfect of ail, because it expresses perseverance in spite of unjust trials:

Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This meritorious act springs from all the virtues and gifts, particularly from heroic patience in persecution by which the soul is finally purified, so that a super-human happiness is found even in those torments. These sublime words were never heard before, and they are a sign of supernatural wisdom and mortification. Referring to these words, St. John Chrysostom says: "He who seeks only the glory of God is not afraid of being defeated in the sight of men."

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, the joy of contemplation and union with God even amid persecutions. This is a vivid and concrete description of the greatness of Christian perfection; as grace surpasses nature, it is immensely superior to merely human perfection of which

the wise Greeks spoke. And those words throw light on the proposition in which the whole sermon on the Mount is summed *up: Be you, therefore, perfect, as yoi+ r heavenly Father is perfect.* Have that perfection which is supernatural, not merely angelic but divine, whose goal is to see God, as He sees Himself, immediately, and to love Him forever.

Priests in particular should strive after this perfection.

NOTES TO CHAPTER B

1. See, in particular, S.T., 1-2, q. 63, a. 3. 2. See *Ibid.*, 2-2, q. 45.

The Correlation of the Virtues and Gifts

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l Justice	Gift of piety	Blessed are the meek
(religion)		
Cardinal Virtues		
Theological Virtues		
Faith	Gift of wisdom	Blessed are the peacemakers
Hope	Gift of understanding	Blessed are the clean of heart
Charity	Gift of knowledge	Blessed are they who weep
Prudence	Gift of counsel	Blessed are the merciful
Fortitude	Gift of fortitude	Blessed arc they who hunger and thirst after justice
Temperance	Gift of fear	Blessed are the poor.

CHAPTER 9

Interior Life of the Priest

1. Introduction

It is the aim of Spiritual Theology to unite, with a practical view, teaching which is to be found in various theological tracts of St. Thomas.

There are many Christians who, though accepting in general the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, yet fail to give sufficient thought to their own personal sanctification and salvation. The early Christians, on the contrary, were most zealous and generous in their striving after personal holiness. Influenced by practical naturalism, many men and women of today, including Christians, no longer appreciate the sterling worth of a temperate and personal Christian life and seem to think that the achievements of our modern civilization are of more lasting value than that nobility of soul which was the possession of our Christian forefathers. Indeed the terrifying breakdown of the modern world is due precisely to the fact that it is no longer profoundly or properly Christian. It is important to emphasize in a practical way the value of redemption, not only for mankind in general but for the individual and humble follower of Jesus Christ, thereby encouraging all to greater personal generosity.

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This bas been discussed in various ways by St. Bernard, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, and recently for priests by Cardinal Mercier in *La Vie Intérieure, Appel aux Ames Sacerdotales,* and by my grand-uncle Canon Maurice Garrigou, who during the French Revolution accomplished much in the province of Toulouse. I quote From his principal writing on the interior life, published in the *Levue d'Ascétique et de Mystique, 1937, pp. 124140: "Considérations sur la Vie Intérieure."*

2. Erroneous ideas

Some think that the interior life is a state of soul in which sensible feeling plays a dominant part, a "sentimentalism" which emphasizes a sickly shadow of love which is wholly or partly absent from the will. Effective charity is thus sacrificed to affective charity, which in turn is adulterated and confused with sensible devotion. Shortlived as a fire in chaff, this state of soul gives way to one of spiritual sloth from which it is difficult to escape. In short, these souls erroneously believe that they possess an interior life which they are far from having and they simulate something they could not have experienced.

Others, on the contrary, have such an elevated concept of the spiritual life that they make it a thing extraordinary, reserved, a privilege for the few, unattainable by the many. Accordingly, these rest content with a lifeless and mechanical round of spiritual exercises and seek in outward activity the life for which they yearn. As will later be apparent, both these views have false notions of the goal to be achieved and the principal means of attaining it. There are,
indeed, other erroneous views of the interior life, but they can be reduced to the two which we have just mentioned. This is how Cardinal Mercier speaks of them: "Some would have the perfect interior life to be the exclusive possession of privileged souls. Others despair of attaining it because of some sin of frailty, whereas the chief obstacle for them is not their weakness, but their pride. Then there are inexperienced souls who confuse imaginary perfection with that real and concrete perfection which the Gospel bids us, in accordance with God's will, seek here and now. Others would seem to believe that perfection is (inseparable from some particular natural ability which they themselves do not possess They do not realize that the indispensable condition for the life of union is humility, which is founded on supernatural charity and strengthened by our Holy Communion."

3. True interior life

What then is the true interior life? The great spiritual writers reply: *The interior life is a life* Of *intifnate union Ivith God, achieved by perfect seif-denial and by constant recollection and prayer.* This doctrine, taught and developed by St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, the *Imitation of Christ,* St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, bas strong scriptural foundation, in

particular these words of St. Paul: "Therefore if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. *For yo2r are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God..* When

Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:1-3). "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection" *(Ibid., 3'. 14).* That is: you are dead with reference to a life of sin, but your new life is a hidden one, the life of sanctifying grace which with charity is the seed of glory. Hence every just man, every soul in sanctifying grace, must develop an interior life so conceived that he can say with St. Paul: "For I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. *2:20).* For this new life infused into the sou] by baptism and nourished by the Eucharist is the life of Christ, Head of the Mystical Body of which I am a member. We must live more and more by virtue of this higher life so that Christ may be more living within us than we ourselves; so that through Him and with Him we think, pray, desire, suffer and work-indeed, so that His life may be extended to and prolonged in ours. In brief, our life is hidden in God with Christ, who desires unceasingly to live in us as in His members: "I am the true vine, you are the branches" (John *15:3).* This is clearly the teaching of revelation upon the true nature of the interior life as viewed from the goal of that life, namely intimate union with God through Christ. Book II, chapter 1, of the Imitation should be read as a commentary on this doctrine. There the author speaks of the internal conversation of the soul with God, and goes on to explain the words of our Lord: "If any-one love me, he will keep my word. And we will come to him and will make our abode with him" (John *14:23)'* we' i.e., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

To avoid all danger of illusion, however, the distance between the two terms of this spiritual ascent must always be kept in mind. Father Maurice Garrigou writes: "We live, but it is we ourselves rather than Christ that lives within us, because vanity, flightiness of thought, inconstancy, dissipation, the bewitching of vaniry that obscures good things' (Wisdom *4:12)* and inordinate love of self all get the better of us and hinder in us the growth of the love of God and our neighbor. Frequently we live not interiorly, but exteriorly in the regions of imagination and sensibility; and our soul is so confused that the very source of our being remains unknown to us. And yet the center of our being should be the dwelling-place of the Most Holy Trin-ity. In this way only can the Kingdom of Christ be established within us so that He may be for us the life-giving Vine and the Head of His members. This interior life, however, remains for us as strange as that of a far-off country."

4. *Growth in true interior* life (A) Perfect self-denial

To reach the desired goal, two means are vitally necessary: perfect self-denial, and a constant and prayerful recollection in God. The same truth is expressed more formally in the statement that union with God is achieved by the purgative way in which self-denial plays a considerable part, and the illuminative way which is characterized by constant recollection and quasi-continua] prayer. To each of these two means great attention must be paid, as well as due consideration for the situation and circumstances in

which each individual person will find himself. Self-denial, according to St. Basil, is a parting from that self-will not conformed to the divine will. It is a mysterious dying to all inordinate inclinations, says St. John of the Cross. This voluntary emptying calms the tumult of our passions and creates in the soul that peace and tranquiliry which is the foundation of the interior life. But we will be deceiving ourselves if we think that our passions are dead when they are but quieted; what is cast forth returns promptly and what is quenched is easily set afire again. We must be on our guard against dalliance with the initial suggestion of sin. Self-denial is a voluntary dying to the world, to vanity, pride, attachment to one's own opinions and impulses. It is opposed to any self-complacency in the virtues or talents which God has granted to us and is indeed, in the words of St. Paul, "a daily

dying" to the lower life in order that we may receive the higher. By this voluntary renunciation or expropriation, the soul, no longer moved by inordinate self-love, is rendered entirely docile to the Holy Spirit, and full scope is given to His gifts. Previously, these gifts were like sails fastened to the mast of a ship; now they are unfurled and filled by the wind. The mind follows the inclination of a heart which has been renewed, because everyone judges according to his inclination; and these inclinations are now those of a heart purified and inflamed by the love of God, and it is toward God that the flame consistently rises. Thus the soul that has been freed from the hindrance of self-love and egoism finds its rest "heartto-heart" in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is there attentive to every divine inspiration and God speaks, as it were, spiritually to such a soul by the inspiration of the seven gifts which are in the soul of every just man. So "the Spirit himself giveth testimony that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:16).

(B) **Constant and prayerful recollection**

Self-abnegation thus understood in a practical and concrete way leads to that habitual recollection which is the second necessary means toward union with God. Inconstant souls who are one day recollected and the following day given to outward things, thus losing great graces, do not arrive at the goal. They never seem to grasp the meaning of the Psalmist: "Taste and see how sweet is the Lord" (Ps. 33). This is the recollection which our Lord speaks of when He says: "We ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). It is the interior prayer of desire which is ever ascending before the throne of God, the breathing-in by the soul, so to speak, of the actual grace which sustains us spiritually just as the air we breathe into our lungs clears and renews the blood stream. The illuminative way consists in this almost continuous prayer of recollection and docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Hence the words of the Imitation are very appropriate: "Many are found to desire contemplation, but they are not careful to practice those things which are required for its attainment." Again: "Linless a man be disengaged from all things created, lie cannot freely attend to things divine. And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few who know howto separate themselves entirely from perishable creatures. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the sotil and lift her above herself. And unless a man be elevated

in spirit and freed from attachment to all creatures and wholly united to God, whatever he knows and whatever he has is of no great importance. Far more noble is that learning which flows from above, from the divine influence, than that which is laboriously acquired by the industry of man." That a priest should be able to preach the divine word *from the abundance o this heart is* certainly much more noble and necessary. "A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things" (Matt. 12:35)-and this good treasure will not remain idle.

5. *Perfect self-denial and continual recollection lead to intimate union with God*

Perfect self-denial and continual recollection, which are in no way incompatible with an active life, lead the Christian soul, in particular the soul of a priest, toward union with God-that is, to true joy and youth, and to the unitive life of the perfect which is the treasure from which the priest draws forth good things. It is founded upon a lively faith enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and upon a charity which is both affective and effective. Faith of this kind, enlightened by the gifts of Understanding and Wisdom, usually acquires a *cognitio sapida et penetrans* "°a penetrating and savouring knowledge" of divine things; and this leads to a special act of charity called "infused," as it proceeds not only from infused charity but also from a particular inspiration. This act, however, remains human, free, and meritorious, made by the sou] under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus in a very real sense "the Spirit gives testimony that we are the sons of God"; by the gift of Piety He fills us with the love of children for their Father. This intimate union with God proceeds in the normal development of things from the three theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all of which are in the soul

of every man in the state of grace, and increase step by step with charity and should continue to increase until we have drawn the last breath.

A priest must desire, humbly yet confidently and eagerly, this intimate union with God and Jesus Christ, in order that he may be united with Christ the supreme priest and truly nourish the souls of his flock. In every prayer, humility and confidence should be united. Otherwise a priest cannot become another Christ.

Elevated though it be, this intimate union is not *de jure* extraordinary, a fact which marks it off from graces which, properly speaking, are extraordinary, such as the gift of prophecy, knowledge of hearts, stigmatization, the gift of tongues.

The unitive life fulfills in various ways those wards of St. Paul: "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man: that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge: that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19). "So that," comments St. Thomas, "you may participate perfectly in all God's gifts, namely in the plenitude of virtue and afterwards in that of beatitude which is the effect of charity."

But all this does not mean that in the unitive life the soul has no longer any crosses to bear. On the contrary, the soul now begins to read with an understanding which daily grows deeper the lesson of the cross, and fired with the love of Christ crucified she desires to have some share in His sorrows. I "now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for his body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Thus it is that Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, leads certain of His members to a life of reparation for the salvation of others. Just as the supreme Cause bestows on creatures the dignity of causality, so likewise does Christ our Redeemer bestow on many of His members the dignity of a life of reparation. These privileged souls make reparation in Christ and through Christ and with Christ, so that the merits of His passion, which of itself is all sufficient and of infinite value, may be applied to their own souls and to the souls of others. To be effective of salvation, these merits lack nothing but their full application to our own souls and the souls of all sinners.

6. *Answering the call of Christ*

There is a danger that we do not sufficiently answer this call of Christ. The call to intimate union with God corresponds, for the priest, not only to the counsel but to the precept and obligation to strive after the perfection of charity. Nor is it only, as we have said, a *general* obligation based on the supreme precept to love God and our neighbor, but a *special obligation* based on priestly ordination and on the priestly office. It is serious, therefore, not to answer this call. Christ calls His priests to intimate union

with Himself. He calls them in many ways: externally through the Gospel and through lectures given during spiritual exercises; interiorly by special graces. If a priest does not answer this call, if lie does not corne, if he does not hear, if he even draws back, then *there is danger tlzat Christ will no longer call him* in the saine way, nor in the same way will He "knock at the gate of our heart." "Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will corne in to him and will sup with him: and he with me" (Apoc. 3:20). The proximately sufficient graces which the soul has resisted will then become more rare, and there will perhaps remain graces which are only remotely sufficient for intimate union with God. This has happened because the priest "has not known the time of the visitation of the Lord." He should then say to himself : "I am a priest and souls need my ministry." As St. Augustine said: "God does not order us to do impossible things, but in ordering us He admonishes us to do what we can and ask His help for whatever is outside our power." I must pray, therefore, with humility, confidence, perseverance, and Christ will hear me

again so that I may work with fruit in His vineyard. To me also bas it been said: "Corne to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will refresh you."

The priest ought then to continue his ascent until lie reaches the summit to which he was called on the day of his ordination, and he should do so particularly because the souls of his $ock need it. And he should not break his journey until he bas reached the end.

This teaching is based on the Gospels, on the Epistles of St. Paul, and on what St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. John

of the Cross, and St. Francis de Sales later taught about the greatness of the supreme precept, the charity of those *in via* which should always increase until death, and their teaching on the seven gifts which are connected with charity and which as infused habits grow normally with the growth of charity. It is based also on the fact that in order for a priest to preach *from the abundance o this heart he* must have a living faith illuminated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and both affective and effective charity which can be communicated for the salvation of souls.

In short, that a priest may be *another Christ* he must have in his soul the fire of charity-a zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls-which will imply an almost constant communion with God about the ministry which is to be carried out in His name. This is not merely probable, but certain.

As a complement to what has been said about the need for a perfect self-denial and recollection in order for a priest to reach perfection, we shall speak now about the *interrelation o fthe virtues* and their *progressive purification* in view of perfection. Here we shall show more clearly the harmony between the teaching of St. Thomas on the virtues and on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching of the great spiritual writers like St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales and others.

CHAPTER 10

Virtues of the Priestly Life

1. Harmony o fthe virtues

In modern times, when faced with great international disturbance, many people speak of a new world and a new order; but they do not sufficiently realize what the Church has often pointed out: that there must be a link between progress and tradition, that we cannot be sure of a worthy and peaceful future unless we build it upon what is best in the past. The new must be based on the old; if not, the new world will be without a foundation and will pass away without bearing any fruit; if it despises the past, it too will be despised after it has labored in vain to achieve something worthwhile.

It is often said that in every living organism there must be a force which assimilates new food and a force which conserves, and that there must be an equilibrium betv,*een these two forces. The organism will die if there is no new assimilation; and death, through a loss of strength, will be the outcome, if the food which is assimilated is not conserved. If an automobile is to run properly it must have power and brakes.

In the Church and in every society there must be an 135

equilibrium between the progressive and the conserving force. If there is no progress, as in the Eastern schismatic churches, there will be the immobiliry of death; if there is no conserving tradition, as in liberal Protestantism and in that type of socialism which leads to materialistic

communism and atheism, there will be the instability of constant change. In the latter case, the descent without any brake becomes very dangerous.

In order to preserve an equilibrium of forces, both in individual life and in the life of the community, it is not enough for us Christians to have a natural dynamism, such as democratic aspirations. These aspirations are, of course, some help against dictatorship and totalitarianism, but without Christian traditions they are clearly insufficient to preserve the equilibrium of which we have spoken.

On the other hand, this equilibrium is preserved by the Holy Spirit through the *interrelation of the virtues.* It is of this precious fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22) that I would now like to speak.

First of all, it must be remembered that sins are not connected one with another. As St. Thomas points out,' all mortal sins are a turning away from God, and therefore one cannot be remitted without another; they are not, however, connected. Actually, they are often contrary to one another, for example greed and prodigality, cowardice and rashness. Evil things therefore are opposed to one another and eventually destroy one another.

On the other hand all virtues have the same goal and therefore, especially in their perfect form, are connected one with the other in prudence and charity.

Virtues in an imperfect form-that is, when they are

only insecure and unstable dispositions-are not connected. They are of three kinds.

(a) Natural temperament. One who by natural temperament is brave is often not gentle.

(b) Acquired disposition. The soldier who has learned to be brave in battle and is such not through love of the virtue, but through desire for glory, is often sensual. At times this sensuality prevents him from fulfilling his military duties.

(c) True virtues in process of formation. Even when true virtues are being formed, but are still dispositions which are easily moved, they are not yet connected. One can be in the process of acquiring the virtue of justice and yet not be chaste.

Moreover, as long as the soul remains in the state of mortal sin, those acquired virtues which were in the process of formation are not connected. In such a case, the soul is turned away from its ultimate end and is therefore ill-prepared to fulfill its obligations, even those of the natural order.

But when the Holy Spirit comes into the soul through charity, the true acquired virtues which were in process of formation are strengthened, and if sufficiently firm, solid, and stable, are connected one with another. A fortiori, infused virtues are connected with charity, as properties flowing from sanctifying grace.[2]

Aristotle's dictum that true prudence cannot exist without the moral virtues and that the latter cannot exist without prudence, their director, finds its experimental proof in the life of the just man. Prudence, in truth, is the "charioteer of the virtues," the "right way of doing things."

The principal reason for this connection of the virtues *is: Each person considers that end agreeable which is in harmony with his affections.* The ambitious man finds agreeable whatever is favorable to his ambition, the mild man whatever is comformable with mildness.

In practice, eacla person judges according to his own inclinations of will and emotion. If, therefore, these inclinations are not rectified by virtues, the practical judgment will not be right. At times this judgment may appear prudent because of a certain perspicacity, expertness or astuteness, but it will not be truly prudent, because in it there will be a defect either of justice or patience or temperance or mildness or simplicity; perhaps there will be a certain duplicity, haste, or laziness.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, when He cornes into the soul, connects through prudence and charity the infused virtues, and even the acquired virtues-if previously there has been sufficient exercise to acquire them. Thus, all virtues grow together, says St. Thomas, "like the five fingers of a hand.'"

Moreover, the Holy Spirit has linked up the virtues and the gifts, for, as St. Thomas shows,' the seven gifts are linked up with charity in that the Holy Spirit and the seven gifts are given when charity is infused into the soul. This is true of every person in the state of grace, depending upon the degree of charity which he possesses. This harmony is wonderful, particularly in the case of those

who are near perfection. Thus, chastity is helped in time of temptation by the gift of fear, "Fix my flesh, O Lord, in your fear"; fortitude by the gift of fortitude, especially when one is faced with martyrdom, justice toward Godor religion, which gives God the worship due him

is helped, particularly in time of involuntary aridity, by the gift of piety, from which springs a filial affection for God. When one is faced with complex situations, or unForeseen difficulties, prudence is assisted by the gift of counsel. Faith, assisted by the gift of understanding, penetrates the mysteries of salvation. Similarly, hope is assisted against presumption by the gift of fear, and under the inspiration of the gift of knowledge it realizes the vanity of created things and the gravity of sin. Thus through hope %ve more ardently desire to possess God and His grace. Finally, charity is assisted by the gift of wisdom by which we sec all things in God as their supreme cause and ultimate end; thus, we see that all good things proceed from Him, and that evil only comes when divine providence permits it for a higher good which we see so clearly that we shall cooperate in achieving it. This produces peace; and, according to St. Augustine, the gift of wisdom corresponds to the happiness of those who are at peace.

However, since intellectual gifts are both speculative and practical, they will appear in some just people in a contemplative form, in others in a practical form, more directly related, as in the case of St. Vincent de Paul, to action.

This wonderful harmony or interrelation of the virtues and gifts is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In the Epistle to the Galatians we read: "The truit of the Holy Ghost is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, meekness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity."

2. *Exemplified in Christ*

In Jesus Christ, particularly, this wonderful harmony appears; for in Him the virtues, even those that appear opposed to each other, such as meekness and fortitude, are

united in a most intimate manner. Our divine Lord had all the virtues in a heroic degree. In Him the most ardent love of God and an immense mercy toward sinners are wondrously blended; in Him are united a love of truth and justice and the greatest compassion for sinners, a compassion for those who tortured Him, for whom He prayed at the moment of His crucifixion, fulfilling most beautifully the words of the Psalmist: "Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed" (Ps. 84:11).

In Christ we find profound humility joined to great dignity and great-heartedness; the fortitude of a martyr to the meekness of the crucified; the highest wisdom to perfect prudence.

This sublime harmony of the heroic virtues in Christ, and the fact that it endured te, the very end of His life is a "moral miracle," as apologies have pointed out: a miracle confirming Christ's claim to be divine.

Something similar, although of a less heroic degree, is found in the lives of true martyrs. According to St. Thomas 5 and Benedict XIV s we can distinguish true martyrs from false ones by observing how the virtues are joined in them. Like our divine Lord and St. Stephen, true martyrs are at the saine time brave, humble, and gentle; they pray for their persecutors. False martyrs are different: their fanaticism is a certain blind obstinacy which avoids discussion, rules out wisdom, prudence, modesty, humility, and meekness. As apologies have shown, the constancy of martyrs is a direct result of God's action, manifested by the surpassing beauty of virtues, so varied and different, joined together in splendid unity.

Conclusion

In our day men must do penance for their sins and for the "works of the flesh"-"sensuality, the service of (modern) idols, enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies."

We must ask the Holy Spirit to give us those fruits of His which are "charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity." We must pray and

strive daily to reach that unity of the virtues in charity, "which is patient, kind ... which suffers all things, believes all things, hopes for all things, endures all things."

Only in this way will be preserved, in our own individual life and in the collective life of religious Orders and the Church, the conservative force and the progressive force. And what is best in the past will be preserved as a foundation for a worthy and fruitful future, so that it shall really be a beginning of life eternal.

3. *Application of doctrine to priestly perfection* "The Spirit of truth will teach you all truth" (John 16:13), but "try the spirits if they be of God" (1 John 4:1).

I would like now, in a practical way, to make some applications of the doctrine of the connection of the virtues and gifts, so that we may understand better the nature of priestly and religious perfection.

In modern times, particularly, there is need for a renewal of the interior life. For this renewal, two qualities are necessary: a unity of *mind,* so that the intellect can sec,

amid such great complexity, what should be preserved from tradition and what progress should be made; and a living flame *of* charity in the heart, so that charity may be not only "affective" but "effective" as well.

Every false mysticism thinks that it can give this unity of mind and ardor of heart. Even the mysticism of communism, although materialistic and atheistic, says that it can give these two qualities; but in reality it leads to tyranny and universal slavery.

And it is clear that these two qualities cannot be supplied by those aspirations which gradually substitute for true faith, hope, and the love of God, a faith and hope in humanity and a merely theoretical love of humanity. These are great ideas gone mad, as Chesterton said.

For us to have a unity of mind in the intellect and in the heart a love of God and one's neighbor, there must be this *connection of the* virtues, of faith, hope, charity, the moral virtues and the gifts.

This connection is very different from that romantic sentimentalism which is not interested in the virtues; it helps one immensely in the examination of one's conscience and in true spiritual progress.

Without this connection a priest cannot unite ail the qualities necessary for him, qualities urgently needed today. In the life of a priest there must be a conservation of what is true in Christian tradition and a progress in true charity toward his neighbor, a charity which promotes greater distributive and social justice and does away with excessive inequality of circumstances.

To bring this about, a spirit of liturgical prayer, especially in the celebration of Mass, and a true devotion to the

Eucharist are most helpful. The Eucharist contains *the best of the* past-the passion of Christ, of which the Eucharist is a memorial and an application-and *the best of the future*-progress in charity as the beginning of eternal life. It is not enough to know what Christ once said, historically; one must know His influence now in the life of the Church. For the Eucharist contains "Christ who is always alive to intercede for us," Christ who actually offers the Masses daily celebrated. Thus a living devotion to the Eucharist harmonizes beautifully what is best in the past and what is best in the future, with a view of reaching eternal life.

Thus also are united in the priestly life an interior life and an external apostlate. If prayer is neglected, the apostolate becomes too external, sterile, no longer vital because separated from its living source; it becomes almost mechanical. In order to be lifegiving and fruitful, it must proceed "From the abundance of the heart."

For this interior life to become the "soul of the apostolate," there must be increasing self-denial and habitual recollection, which lead to a living faith illuminated by the gifts of intellect and wisdom, a spirit of prayer or filial piety toward God, and a practical charity. In this way alone can the priest truly become the sait of the earth and the life of the world.

He must also unite in himself a firm faith, without any indulgence for error, and a great mercy toward those who have prie astray. His faith would suffer if he had that kind of liberalism which

leads to indifference, and he would fail in mercy if he had a rigorism like that of the Jansenists. His life, therefore, should be a summit between and above

these two opposing deviations. But this summit cannot be reached unless the virtues are united to a very high degree.

A priest must also unite simplicity and a prudence which attends to particular things-"the prudence of a serpent and the simplicity of a dove." He would fail in simplicity and be guilty of duplicity, were he to become utilitarian in outlook or an opportunist. On the other hand, he would not be truly prudent, were his simplicity toe, ingenuous, were be not to recognize a real evil which must be avoided, were he unable to discern the attacks of evil people who abuse the simplicity of the good. Thus, particularly in difficult times, a high degree of prudence without utilitarianism must be linked to a deep simplicity without any naivety. This is impossible without an intimate union of the virtues, and even of the gifts.

A priest must also unite meekness with the firmness of justice and strength. He must be firm without being rigid, possessing commutative, distributive, and social justice, and even equity or epikeia which looks to the spirit rather than to the letter of the law, especially when the exact observance of the law would be a cause of great injury. On the other hand, the meekness of a priest must not become an inept weakness and an indulgence toward those who are evil; otherwise the good would suffer through the excessive daring of the wicked. This also demands a linking up of the virtues in an elevated degree.

The priest must also unite true humility and dignity or magnanimity, always striving to do great things. These two virtues are not opposed but complementary; they help each other like the two slopes of an arch which support a build

ing. Magnanimity prevents humility from degenerating into cowardice, and humility prevents magnanimity from degenerating into pride and ambition. Pride is an inordinate love of one's own excellence, but magnanimity suives moderately after great things, things worthy of great honor, but it does not do so greedily. Rather, it despises honors in comparing them with the great thing after which it strives with courage and calmness.

Finally, a priest must have absolute and perfect chastity. But he cannot be cold of heârt, because he must have compassion for those who are in trouble and sympathize with them.

All these demand the linking up of the virtues in a very high degree. May this, by the help of the Holy Spirit, be achieved in us. We should pray for it. "Ask and you shall receive": this should be asked for in the naine of the Lordjesus.

In practice, one must insist particularly on the initmate union of humble obedience and fraternal charity. As St. Francis de Sales says, humble obedience, which preserves what is best in tradition, is like the root of a tree which penetrates the ground to draw nourishment from it; but fraternal charity is like the high, fruitful branches. The harmony of these two vitrues in the soul of a just man resembles the union of these two parts of a tree.

If the deeper roots and higher branches function properly the tree is at its best. Similarly in a human soul, or in a community, if humble obedience and fraternal charity grow, that soul or that community is good. And if ever anything is wanting in prudence or energy, then God will supply it by the gifts of counsel and fortitude.

This teaching is full of consolation. Fortunately, sins are not interconnected; frequently thty are opposed one to another. But the virtues, and even the gifts, are connected in charity. Thus in Communion, for example, there cannot be any increase in charity without an increase also in the other infused virtues and in the seven gifts; virtues, like "the five fingers of a child's hand, ail grow together."

Conclusion

Gradually, through the ineerconnection and growth of both the acquired and infused virtues, the priest will acquire that spiritual character corresponding to his high vocation. This is evident in the lives of saintly priests and religious, particularly in the lives of the founders of religious orders.

Thus, in spite of great difôculties and worries, there is preserved-I will not call it optimism because a natural optimism of temperament is not sufficient; nor conventional optimism, which remains external and superficial-but *something greater than optimism: a confidence in Cod,* an infused and strengthened hope, and a *true charity,* affective and effective, toward ail, particularly toward those who are unhappy, poor and in need of help.

By humble, devoted and persevering prayer, we obtain from the Holy Spirit the two qualities of mind which are so necessary, a unity of spirit which in such a great complexity judges accurately according to the Spirit of God and not merely according to the spirit of one's nature, and a living flame of increasing love. In this way, the spirit of tradition and true progress are hannonized, so that the

present time, made fruitful by the past, may produce fruit in the future, the real prelude in us to life eternal.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 10

1. See S.T., 1-2, q. 73, a. 1.

2. See *Ibid.*, q. 65, aa. 1 and 2. *3. Ibid.*, q. 66, a. 2.
4. See *Ibid.*, q. 68, a. 5.

5. See St. Thomas Aquinas,*Quod. IV*, a. 9.

6. See Benedict XIV, *De Servorum Dei heatificatione, III*, 21.

CHAPTER 11

Purification of Virtues Is Necessary for Priestly Perfection

7. *Introduction*

After having considered, in the light of priestly perfection, the interrelation of the virtues, we shall now consider the progressive purification of virtues.

St. John of the Cross discussed this question at some length. In the *Dark Night o ithe Soul* he begins by dealing with the defects of beginners. These are, in particular, a kind of spiritual greed, which is an immoderate desire for sensible consolation (sentimentalism, as it is called nowadays), and a certain unconscious, secret spiritual pride. In time of aridity, these are followed by spiritual laziness or *acedia.* Thus the capital sins reappear, but are now centered on things of piety. This is an indication that the virtues have not been sufficiently purified from a mixture of selflove; they are not yet sufficiently strong, and they need to be purified-St. John of the Cross, however, does not speak of the defects which arise later in our ministry of souls.

In order to speak in a practical way for our own time, I shall briefly discuss the failings of young priests and 149

religious, as far as external activity is concerned, as they have been noted without any exaggeration, even with great benevolence, by many spiritual directors.

2. De f ects

Superiors have a grave obligation in conscience to prepare young priests for contact with the real world, so that they will not lose part of their interior life soon after their ordination. On the contrary, they should be perfected in it to work diligently for the salvation of souls.

I will tell you what the Superior General of a certain Congregation, a good and very experienced man, wrote to me.

The difficulties to be overcome should be carefully noted. There is a great difference between the life of recollection in a seminary or convent and in the public life of the ministry. And often, young priests and religious, although studious and pious, are really immature and altogether too naïve when they begin their ministry. As a result there is a grave fear that the serious difficulties of their life in the ministry will be too much for them and will produce sad results.

Generally speaking, young priests, precisely because of their youth, are not prudent; being in the state of grace they have a certain infused prudence, but they oEten lack acquired prudence or else they have it only in its initial stages, in embryo. A good young priest is inclined to be indiscreetly zealous; he has too much confidence in himself, although often not conscious of it, and he may even secretly live somewhat naturalistic ally, confusing natural ambitions with the pure desire of doing good.

At times, a young priest may even think that he already knows the spiritual ways of the Lord, and in a secret spiritual pride he thinks that he can lead souls to a high perfection. In this case the danger is more serious, because the young priest has no doubts about himself, but gives his decisions with great confidence and puts great trust in himself; when it is perhaps too late he will see the mistakes he has made.

What follows, therefore?-The indiscreet zeal and the consolations which he oEten receives in his first assignment drive the young priest completely to the ministry and he says with ardor: "Lord, give me souls." Then by degrees he comes to regard the time of prayer, study, and recollection almost as time lost; it is easy to see what follows. His ministry becomes sterile; instead of sanctifying him and his flock, his activities actually block real progress.

Furthermore, young priests are now living in an age which feels the need to love and be loved. Saints know their own weakness; they do not trust themselves, but do what obedience dictates to them. Generally speaking, young priests are not like that. They are daring; they despise danger and trust in themselves; their cocksureness is lamentable.

They need, thereEore, a special preparation for the realities of life. Directors must insist particularly on thé need for a truly interior life, so that the priest may be able to give and not lose in his work for souls.

Directors must emphatically point out that external min-

istry cannot take the place of prayer. In our work for souls, we must give, but we cannot always be giving; we must also receive from God, and it is in prayer that we receive light and love and strength.

Directors must also note also the dangers of preaching, hearing confessions, spiritual direction, random visits, and even direction which is given in private letters on matters of conscience. Otherwise, an imprudent young priest would unconsciously and gradually lose his true and holy liberty of spirit and union with Jesus Christ. He would spend much time in trivialities and in affections, spiritual in appearance, which do not help either the director or the person being directed to advance spiritually.

Because of these different dangers, the junior priests in some Orders and Congregations are first given work in a ministry within the convent itself and only gradually and slowly is the external ministry entrusted to them. Moreover, they remain for some time under the care of a senior Father, who with wisdom and kindness leads them to full maturity and complete priestly formation. In the judgment of major Superiors, this practical problem is of great importance for the true formation of a priestly conscience. In their spiritual exercises, preachers and confessors should deal with this question gently but firmly.

From all this, it is evident that young priests still need a great purification and strengthening of the virtues. Because of the mixture of inordinate self-love, these virtues are still very imperfect and weak, in that the soul seeking God seeks itself and its own satisfaction to a great degree. This is not yet very evident in the novitiate or seminary but it appears openly in the beginning of one's ministry,

with that natural activity which is not sufficiently sanctified and directed toward God. It has been that "novices have the appearance of holiness but are not really so; young priests have neither the appearance of holiness nor holiness itself; and if they do not make progress, they become useless and sterile in their apostolate."

3. How the virtues are purified

St. Thomas discusses this question when he deals with the purgative virtues and the virtues of a purified soul,l and St.John of the Cross, in the *Dark Plight of the Soul* especially, deals at length with both the active and passive purification of the spirit and the senses.

Theologically, this purification consists in the exercise of each virtue, infused as well as acquired, more and more m line with its formal motive, and not because of some lower motive which is associated with it. In this way, each virtue is purified from anything which weakens it to a greater or lesser degree. Humility, for example, is freed from every kind of cowardice and false humility; religion and piety from all sentimentality and spiritual greed; fortitude from all rashness and over-confidence in oneself; gentleness from every weakness and over indulgence; prudence not only from imprudence and negligence but from all utilitarianism and opportunism as well. In this way the soul finds equilibrium and harmony between and above the opposing deviations—of rigorism and liberalism, for example-and so there is a perfect harmony between a very strong faith in the face of error and a great charity toward the erring.

Every virtue is specified by its own proper object and

formal motive. It follows that virtue is purified by looking more and more to this formal object. This is particularly important in causes for beatification, because it brings more clearly to light the heroic nature of the different virtues and the spirit in which their actions are performed.

Virtues are purified in the same way as gold is purified from its defects in a furnace, a comparison often used in Sacred Scripture. "As gold is tried in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts" (Prov. 17:3). "The trial of your faith, much more precious than gold which is tried by fire" (1 Peter 1:7). Thus gradually, one believes entirely because of the authority of God who reveals; one hopes entirely because of all All-powerful helper; and one loves God because of His infinitely lovable goodness alone, wixhout any inordinate desire for personal consolation. Similarly, Jesus says: "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me ... that bears fruit, he will purge it that it will bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1-2). This text refers to the passive purification which comes from God Himself, not that which we take on ourselves in mortification: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee" (Matt. 5:29).

We shall deal with this question by considering the cardinal virtues in particular, rising from the lower to the higher, and noting how the gifts of the Holy Spirit help the virtues in this progressive purification. In this way, by considering the formal object of each virtue and then their interrelation, we shall see how the heroic nature of their virtues should be described in the lives of the servants of God.

The virtue of temperance-and chastity in particular

is specified by a special object which is igood in itself, a moderation of the passions of the concupiscible appetite. In the case of acquired chastity, this moderation is in]me with right reason and acquired prudence; in the case of infused chastity reason is illuminated by faith and infused prudence.

Infused chastity, therefore, is specified by a higher formai object than acquired chastity, and the latter is a disposition for the former somewhat in the same way as the nimhleness of a harpist's hands

is a disposition for the art which is in bis practical intellect. Acquired chastity gives external ease in the exercise of infused chastity.

In order to purify chastity from every imperfection, not only must the soul be freed from every sensuality that is more or less disordered and from any dangerous friendship; it must also be freed from that insensibility of the heart which is not virtue, although it has the appearance of one. This insensibility is opposed to that Feeling of compassion which one ought to be capable of having.

Similarly, acquired and infused meekness are purified not only when the soul is freed from anger, but also when it is freed from that inept weakness and indulgence which is a false meekness.

In the same way, humility, which prostrates us before the greatness of God, ought to remove not only pride but that false humility also which is a hidden cowardice. In this way, humility is harmonized with magnanimity, a virtue which reasonably and in a Christian way seeks after great things when God wills it. They more and more appear as complementary virtues mutually helpful like the two curves of an arch which support a building. Each virtue is

more and more purified according as it is more and more directed toward its formal object.

Similarly fortitude has its special object, good in itself, in that it is a virtue which moderates the movements of the soul when faced with anything that is frightening. It is a firmness which enables the soul, by bearing and fighting adversity, to follow the dictates of right reason. Acquired fortitude is regulated by the dictates of right reason; infused fortitude by the dictates of right reason illuminated by faith and infused prudence.

It is not sufficient, therefore, to remove ail inordinate, irrational, and unchristian fear. In time of persecution, for example, one must avoid not only weakness and cowardice but also rashness, obstinacy, the hardness of fanaticism, and rigorism of every kind, ail of which are opposed to the virtue of meekness.

Fortitude is gradually perfected as its formal motive overcomes more and more the two vices opposed to it and to each other: cowardice and rashness. The gift of fortitude has a part to play in the purification of the infused virtue of fortitude, since it enables us to have full confidence that we shall avoid every danger and thereby carry out any difficult task we have taken upon ourselves. The gift of fortitude completely excludes inordinate fear and surpasses infused fortitude just as the latter surpasses acquired fortitude. Ail three, however, find unity in action in a way analogous to the unity in action of a violinist's manual dexterity, virtue of art, and musical inspiration.

The rights of others are the object of the virtue of justice, whereby we are prompted te, give each person his due. The formal object of justice is the right of another which
we recognize te, be something inviolably his. Our recognition of such a right may spring from natural causes alone, and in that instance the virtue of justice is one naturally acquired by us. If such a recognition, however, springs from our human reason fortified by the light of faith, the virtue will be that not of acquired, but of infused, justice.

If we are to be perfect, we must possess commutative, distributive, and legal justice. Commutative justice regulates our relations to other individuals; distributive, the relations of superior and inferior; legal, the relations of the individual to the community. Distributive justice is of special importance to one in authority, such as a father in a family or a superior in a community. Al] who exercise authority have the obligation to distribute rights and duties impartially and to reward or punish fairly. Legal justice urges us te> obey ail laws pertaining te, the common good of the society in which we live.

In addition to the three types of justice described in the preceding paragraph, there is another virtue closely allied to justice and essential for its perfection. It can, in fact, be called another species of justice. This virtue, equity or epikeia, whereby we consider not only the letter of the law but its spirit and the intention of the lawgiver as well, steers us clear of legal formalism, excessive rigorism, and unreasoning stubbornness. It tempers justice with kindness and is, in fact, demanded of us by charity. Even before the time of our Lord, Aristotle had noted the necessity of justice and equity or

epikeia. How much more, then, must we, who are followers of Christ, possess the virtue of justice to the highest degree and temper it by equity.

We must also remove every flaw and imperfection from

the virtue of prudence, which is the "charioteer of the virtues," the right way of doing things, of acting. Again, prudence may be either a purely natural, acquired virtue, or it may be an infused virtue, whose corresponding gift is that of counsel. In either case all efforts must be made to perfect it. If we are to exercise the virtue of prudence perfectly we must possess all the moral virtues. Prudence centers upon the thousand and one practical judgments we must make each day, and it is quite obvious that such judgments cannot be good, just, meek, temperate, humble, and firm if we lack the other virtues. Our judgments are always colored by our will and feelings, and it is the job of the moral virtues to purge our will and feelings of the dross of vice which distorts our grasp of reality.

Imprudence of any kind, whether the result of negligence or baste or stubbornness, must naturally be cut out of our hearts. Anything that smacks of utilitarianism and opportunism, of selfish love or militant hatred, demands stamping out, particularly in a priest, and even more so in superiors who have the duty to guide others along the road to perfection.

In like manner we must perfect religion, or the virtue whereby we give God the worship and adoration that is His because of His supreme majesty as Creator and Lord. Religion, as a purely natural virtue, is regulated by reason; as an infused virtue, by faith and prudence. It bas for its corresponding gift that of piety, whereby the Holy Spirit enables us to look upon God not only as Creator and Lord but as our Father as well.

From the virtue of religion we must cut away all irréligion, spiritual laziness, superstition, sentimentalism. The

last named vice is an insidious one. It pretends to love God, but in reality it finds its source in egoism, which makes God merely a means to our own self-glorification. The purification of the virtue of religion must be not only active, on our part, but passive as well. St. John of the Cross, in the first two books of *The Dark Night Of the Soul,* has given the classic explanation of this passive purification. We cannot emphasize too much that, particularly for a priest, the passive purification of the soul is not something unnatural, but rather the normal way to holiness.

4. *Passive purification of the soul*

St. John of the Cross explains the need for passive purification by considering the defects of beginners, defects in large measure remnants of the seven capital sins. Such defects, in the mind of St. John, are deviations from the road to perfection. In beginners there is often a spiritual greed or an immoderate desire for sensible consolation in prayer. In addition, the following defects are found: spiritual pride or a "better-than-thou" attitude; spiritual laziness, which follows in the wake of dryness; spiritual envy; anger; uncontrolled indignation; dejection or moodiness. About this time beginners abandon the interior life and throw themselves into an immoderate zeal for study, prompted by ambition or curiosity, or give themselves over to external activity, an activity purely natural and utterly foreign to that carried out in an apostolic, Christlike manner.

These defects can be reduced to two: spiritual sensuality and spiritual pride. From them springs spiritual laziness when sensible consolations are absent.

St John of the Cross shows that beginners who have actively and generously fought against these defects are often passively purified by God. He writes: "Into this dark night souls begin to enter when God draws them forth from the state of beginners-which is the state of those that meditate on the spiritual road-and begins to set them in the state of progressives-which is that of those who are already contemplatives-to the end that, after passing through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the Divine union of the soul with God." [2] Again: "The night of the sense is common and comes to many: these are the beginners." [3]

Three signs which indicate the passive purification of the soul are given by St. John of the Cross. These are: (1) "When a soul finds no pleasure or consolation in the things of God, it also fails to find it in any thing created; for, as God sets the soul in this dark night to the end that He may quench and purge its sensual desire, He allows it not to find attraction or sweetness in anything whatsoever."' The aridity the soul then feels does not proceed from negligence or spiritual laziness. In such a state the soul secs vividly the vanity of worldly things; by the gift of knowledge it grasps a richer understanding of the deficiency of secondary causes and the gravity of sin. Melancholy may, perhaps, be the cause of such aridity of soul. But any doubt as to its cause can be solved by other signs and even from the fact that the individual in question is often in perfect health.

(2) "Memory is ordinarily centered upon God, with painful care and solicitude, thinking that it is not serving God, but is backsliding, because it finds itself without sweetness in the things of God." 5 Such is an indication that the person has not been "backsliding." Ardent desire for God and proper attention to obligations, in spite of all sensible dryness in prayer, show that melancholy is not the cause of such a condition. At such a time one does not shorten the time given over to prayer under any pretext for study or active works. At this period the Holy Spirit aids and comforts the soul by His gift of fear, a filial fear of offending God by sin. The ardent love for God is evidence of the gifts of piety and Fortitude which strengthen one to continue prayer despite all dryness and desolation.

(3) "The soul can no longer meditate or reflect in the imaginative sphere of sense as it was wont, however much it may of itself endeavor to do so. For God now begins to communicate Himself to it, no longer through sense . . . but by pure spirit, into which consecutive reflections enter not... He communicates Himself to it by an act of simple contemplation." eHere appears the influence of the gift of knowledge which makes us realize our dependence on God: "without me you can do nothing," and the gift of piety which gives us a lively affection for God as our Father. Despite great dryness of senses, the soul, if truly generous, is purged of sentimentalism and reaches a more spiritual knowledge of God and of itself and a more ready love for God's service. In this way the virtue of religion is purified and becomes a true devotion of the will, utterly independent of sensible devotion.

During this passive purification of the senses God often allows strong temptations against chastity and patience to arise so that we may, by resisting them, gain great increase of virtue. Feeble resistance is of no avail; heroic generosity

is demanded. By means of this passive purification the higher facilities of the soul obtain full mastery of the lower. After this passive purification of the senses the soul reaches the stage of proficients, the illuminative way or the way of infused contemplation. This way is described by St. John of the Cross in the fourteenth chapter of the first book of *The Dark Night of the Soul.* This contemplation proceeds from a living faith strengthened by the gifts of understanding and wisdom. Faith becomes penetrating and discerning, and the soul usually advances for several years in this wav. But the defects of proficients still remain. Of them St. John declares: "But there still remain m the spirit the strains of the old man.... These souls have likewise the *hebetudo mentis* and the natural roughness which every man contracts through sin, and the distraction and outward clinging of the spirit.'" They may even have a natural harshness, rooted in self-love, for their neighbor. Thus perfect justice is absent as well as the perfect spirit of faith, confidence in God, and charity; many other defects also remain, such as love for power by guiding or teaching others. The higher faculties of the soul are not yet completely subjected to God, perfectly docile to the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

An active purification must take place, along with a passive one, so that the virtues which are in the higher faculties of the soul-humility and the three theological virtues-can be purified from everything imperfect.

St. John of the Cross writes: "The stains of the old man [must] be removed with the soap and strong lye of the purgation of this night." 8

If we continue to be generous, God brings about this

purification by an infused light, the gift of understanding, whereby we see and almost experience God s might and majesty and our own misery. Even in spiritual aridity u*e can have a progressive contemplation of God and our own misery, which are, as St. Catherine of Siena says, the highest and lowest points of a circle which is continually growing larger. From this we experience the painful presence of the purifying God.

In this way does God purify humility, faith, hope, and charity, so that the formal motive of these virtues more and more predominates over any lower motive. We shall briefly explain this matter.

Humility is the basic virtue inasmuch as it removes the impediment of pride. As such, it may be compared to the excavations which are necessary before constructing a building: the bigger the building, the deeper must be these excavations. It may also be compared to the root of a tree: tlae higher the tree, the deeper must its root penetrate the ground. To a certain degree reHection on our part will give us a consciousness of our own weakness, but many illusions will remain, illusions springing from our own judgment or from secret pride. When God wants to do away with these illusions, He shows us our own weakness and misery by the gift of knowledge and understanding, thereby helping us to root out all false humility and nourish true humility. Purified in such a way we can make a good confession, not a perfunctory one, but one utterly sincere and frank. When severe divine punishment comes, we can say: "I have certainly deserved this." The humble man bows down as nothing before the infinite majesty of God: "My substance is as nothing before You."

Faith is similarly purified. It is an infused virtue by which we believe, on God's authority, the mysteries which He has revealed. But our faith often rises very little above the natural virtues of religion, or rests toe, much in formulae, in the letter by which supernatural mysteries are expressed and in the external aspect of the mysteries of the Incarnation, Redemption and Eucharist. It does not penetrate them sufficiently. In a similar way we believe in eternal life and the eternity of punishment. Though our belief is based on the authority of God revealing, we are helped by various secondary motives upon which we insist too much-because, for example, others in our society also believe, or because we see how these mysteries are in harmony with the natural truths of religion and with our natural aspirations.

Would our faith remain firm if strong temptations rose up against it, if God at the same time showed us the profundity of the mysteries, for example, the greatness of His infinite justice toward the damned and the gratuitous nature of eternal predestination, the freedom with which He gives the gift of final perseverance? Would our faith remain firm during a great aridity of soul if we had no consolation and could not feel the conformity of our faith with our aspirations?

The formal motive of theological faith would still remain: God has revealed all these mysteries and they are to be believed as infallibly true on His authority. In this way the faith of saints was often purified and provedwhen the Apostles, for example, saw Jesus betrayed, scourged, crowned with thorns, condemned to death on the cross, crucified. On Calvary, also, the faith of our Lady, St. John and St. Mary Magdalen, was proved. Similarly, the holy martyrs suffered long torments, and many saintsBlessed Henry Suso, for example, for ten years, and St. Vincent de Paul efor four- endured great internal temptations against faith. Many saints resisted similar temptations in this way by asking for an actual efficacious grace to overcome them, and thus they made heroic acts of faith based on its formal object alone: God bas revealed these mysteries to be believed on His authority. At the end of this crucifixion, their faith was completely purified: it was stronger, truly contemplative, and no longer consisted in Formulae or in the external aspect of the mysteries, but it penetrated them. Thus saints live by faith and the supernatural life was for them, in the end, almost the only true life.

Hope needs a similar purification. It is an infused virtue by which we expect, with certain confidence, eternal life to be obtained with divine assistance. Because of His mercy and all-powerful help we ought to expect the possession of God. We do, indeed, hope in this way; but in the begin-

ning of our spiritual life our infused hope is not easily distinguished from that human hope by which we expect certain temporal goods which perhaps may injure us. And although the formal motive of hope is the hope of God, we place too much trust in the human assistance of our protectors and friends, in our virtues, in our work which is proceeding quite satisfactorily.

But if God took away all the temporal goods which we espected, and at the same time our secondary motives of confidence, the help of our friends, the esteem of our superiors, if He showed us our weakness rather than our

strength, if at the saine time temptations rose against hope, would our hope remain firm, because of that one motive: "God does not order us to do impossible things and He does not abandon the person who calls on Him; He is always the merciful God and the all-powerful helper"? In this way, the hope of saints has been purified. For example, the devil used to say to St. Catherine of Siena: "Of what use are ail your mortifications? If you have been predestined you will be saved without them; if you have not been predestined even with them you will be damned." And then the devil left her. Sometimes, similar temptations come in one's last agony, and that is why we should pray very much for those who are in agony, by saying the special prayers for the visitation of the sick and the commendation of a soul to God.

Finally, charity is purified in a similar way. It is a virtue by which we love God for Himself, as a friend, to be loved above ail things by reason of His infinite goodness. For God's sake we love our neighbor so that he may glorify God now and forever. We do indeed love God and our neighbor in this way, but often with a very notable mixture of imperfection, springing from a love of ourselves. We even love God because of the consolation which we receive from Him, and our neighbor because ot the gratitude he shows us, or because of the various ways in which he can be useful to us.

When God wishes to lead the souls of His children to pure love, for several months He gradually removes ail consolation, not only sensible but spiritual also. Similarly, He permits indifference and sometimes even ingratitude on the part of our neighbor. It seems that we can do no good.
Then God must be loved for the true motive-because He is infinitely good in I-Iimself, infinitely better than ail the benefits which He bestows. And our neighbor must similarly be loved for God's sake, because he is a son of God or can yet become a son of God.

Thus the charity of St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus was purified at the end of her life from every mixture ot selflove. The sweetness of the love of God is then united to fortitude of sou] which perseveres in dryness, even is spiritual. This leads to the love of the cross in a life of reparation for the conversion of sinners, after the example of the suffering Christ and His sorrowing Mother.

5. Conclusion

From ail this, it appears clearly enough that virtues are purified when their proper object, with their own formal motive, dominates more and more. Thus the three forma] motives of the three theological virtues appear in the night of the spirit as three stars of the first magnitude. These are: the First Truth or the Authority of God revealing; Mercy and Omnipotence helping us; and Infinite Goodness to be loved above everything else.

This passive purification is, as St. John of the Cross says, required for the full perfection of the Christian lite, and it leads to an infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith and intimate union with God.

It is evident that in the lives ot the servants of God v< e Generally find two periods, like two tunnels, the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit. Sometimes, it is difficult to say historically how souls who were tried in this darkness overcame strong temptations. But if they have

passed out from the first night with a sufl7ciently clear heroicity of virtue, and if they have left the second night tivith an even more manifest heroism, it is a sign that they have not lost their way in these nights; or if they have lost it at any moment-like Peter during the passion when he denied our

Lord-Providence has raised them up so that they might continue the ascent generously to the end. The obscurity of these two periods, therefore, is not an objection against, but rather becomes an argument for, heroism, because we have heroism only when there has been a batde and victory over great temptations, which, in these two periods particularly, are caused by the devil. The soul conquers him only when it has passed through these two storms and acquired merit in proportion. Thus, in the causes for beatification the interior sufferings of servants of God can be brought to light, so that there will arise a greater understanding of how these sufferings lead in a wonderful way to purification and sanctity, according to the words of St. Paul: To *them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints* (Rom. 8:28).

7. *Ibid., p.* 376. 8. *Ibid., p.* 376.

9. St. Vincent de Paul generously accepted a special trial in order to free a certain professor of theology front strong temptations against the faith. And then he himself was strongly tempted for four years in the same way. The temptations against faith were so great that he wrote the creed on a chart which he put on his breast, underneath his clothes. When the temptations became exceptionally strong, St. Vincent would lay the creed next his heart as a profession of faith. For four years he made heroic acts of this virtue and eventually it was very much strengthened and purified From every imperfection. Thus his faith became more contemplative, penetrating, and discerning; even amid the disturbances of life in the cvorld he preserved a great interior life, which radiated and reached that rare contemplation of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which he constantly saw Jesus in abandoned children, in captives, in those who were in prison.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1 1

1. See S.T., 1-2, q. 61, a. 5.

2. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the* Soul, Book 1, Chapter 1, in Volume I of *The Complete* Works *of St. John of the Cross,* translated and edited by E. Allison Peers, (revised ed., Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1953), p. 300. All references to the works of St. John are to the Peers' translation.

3. *Ibid, p.* 349.

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CHAPTER. 12

Priestly Mental Prayer

1. Introduction

Prayer in general is the elevation of the mind to God, by which we ask Him for those things which are useful or necessary for salvation.' Vocal prayer ought to lead to mental prayer which is like an intimate conversation or colloquy with God.

Normally, mental prayer advances as the soul makes progress in the interior life. In the purgative way the soul, in order to avoid sin, must make many considerations and rejections to reach firm resolutions which, strictly speaking, under the direction of faith, are part of the virtue of prudence.

Then, when the passions are more under control and are almost calm, prayer becomes more affective, and the virtue of religion, with the gift of piety, predominates, and special attention is given to the four purposes of sacrifice-adoration, reparation, petition and thanksgiving.

Finally, the soul reaches the state of contemplative prayer, which may be called theological prayer in that it proceeds particularly from the theological virtues, with the corresponding gifts of understanding and wisdom. At this

stage, the soul "aims principally that it inhere in God and take its delight in Him." 2

2. D iscursive pra yer

The method of discursive prayer has been very well described by St. Francis de Sales.' It is divided into three parts:

The first part is the preparation for prayer, when the soul puts itself in the presence of God, humbly asks His help and puts before itself the subject of the mcditationthe passion of our divine Lord, death, the particular judgment after death, hell, purgatory, heaven, the obligations of religion, or the obligations of the Christian state which must be fulfilled.

The second part is the meditation or consideration strictly so called of the subject which has been chosen. The passion of our divine Lord, for example, is considered not only as an historic reality but as something supernatural as well, with its main practical consequences as far as we are concerned.

Similarly we may meditate on death or the judgment of God. The soul ponders on the subject which has been considered and then speaks to itself about it.

The third part consists in the affections and resolutions. In other words, the soul should not only speak with itself by thinking over the subject of the meditation, but it should also talk to God, directing toward Him its desire, its affective and effective charity, more firmly moving itself to the mortification of the passions and the imitation of Christ. Prudence, which guides one's life, will indicate what resolutions should be taken.

The conclusion of mental prayer consists in thanking God and asking for the grace to keep one's resolutions. It is in this way that those who begin well make discursive prayer, for which many considerations and reflections are needed, so that the soul is gradually raised above sensible things and gives itself more generously to God. Some make their meditation by slowly reading the Gospel or the Imitation o **f** *Christ;* others by hearing Mass, or considering its various parts; others again by slowly saying the Rosary and meditating on its mysteries; others by putting their whole heart into a slow recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

3. *A ffectiveprayer*

In this, the considerations are shorter, and affections predominate in the form of adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, and desire or petition. It is not surprising, therefore, that Blessed Julian Eymard' should insist on the four ends of sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and prayer for divine help. In this prayer there appeau particularly the virtue of religion with the gift of piety, from which springs a filial affection toward God as bather. Because the virtue of religion and the gift of piety are in the will, it is not surprising that this prayer should be called affective.

Affective prayer in line with the purposes of sacrifice is normally done in this way:

Adoration begins while the soul puts itself in the presence of God. In other words, the soul adores the infinite excellence of God and His goodness which is the source of all graces, and it adores even the humanity of Christ, present in the Eucharist, and immolated in an unbloody manner in the Mass. Adoration, therefore, daily becomes

higher and more profound; the words of St. Thomas are verified: "Adoration consists mainly in an interior reverence for God'" by acknowledging His infinite excellence in a practical way and admitting that of ourselves we are nothing.

Next follows a thanksgiving for all the benefits which God has given us-creation, elevation to the order of grace, the Incarnation and Redemption, the Eucharist, and those favors which we have received personally, both before our birth in having been born into a Christian family and the favors which we have received since then.

Reparation for sins normally comes next. The soul asks forgiveness and the grace of deeper contrition so that the stains of sin and bad dispositions, particularly the inordinate love of oneself and egoism, the root of the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, the pride of life and the seven capital sins may be removed. This reparation remedies the love of oneself which is at the base of the will as an evil root which impedes the growth of the good root, charity. In this exercise, the virtues of humility and penance, in addition to the virtue of religion, are exercised.

Finally there is the petition for those graces which we need individually if we are to persevere to the end-a petition, even, for the salvation of all souls. In this way, Jesus Himself prays, interceding for us always, particularly in the Mass at which lie is the principal priest.

Since the virtue of religion is commanded by charity, in the end of this prayer charity prevails-affective charity toward God the Father and toward jesus Christ. But affective charity is not alone; there is also a love conform

mg itself with the divine will and a zeal or ardor of charity toward God who is so little loved by men, and a vivid desire for the extension of His kingdom, the salvation of souls, and the conversion of sinners. A spirit of sacrifice animates this prayer according to the four pur poses of sacrifice.

Several authors do not distinguish affective prayer from contemplation, which they distinguish from discursive meditation.s In affective prayer, "discourse" or reasoning is very short; affection and the ardor of love predominate. We have there a certain contemplation which may be called acquired when it does not proceed from a special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. St. Teresa speaks of this prayer and calls it active recollection.' There are often sensible consolations in this prayer. St. Teresa distinguishes them from the spiritual pleasure of infused contemplation, when she says: "In short, [sensible consolations] arise from nature and end in God. Spiritual joys, on the contrary, arise from God." 8

Moreover, in affective prayer the soul explicitly seeks its own perfection, whereas in infused contemplation it is more united to God and does not think explicitly of its own perfection, but desires rather the glory of God and Christ. Some souls in affective prayer have a very ardent devotion to the Eucharist?

At first sight it seems that this zeal points to mystical prayer, or mystical contemplation; but Father Libermann does not think that this is true, because such zeal is found even in those who have not passed through the dryness of the passive purification of the senses, where, according to St. John of the Cross, infused contemplation begins. In

those souls which have not been passively purified, grace works on the surface of the sou], in the sensitive part, but does not penetrate more deeply. This zeal, therefore, is more vehement than solid, firm, or stable. But the contrary is true in the case of real contemplatives. Such is clearly seen when beginners are faced with trials and do not bear them with generosity if sensible consolations are taken away.

Later on, alter a long aridity of the senses endured with faith and confidence, they will be braver and more constant. Then when they are at prayer, ordinary grace, less vehement but more intense, will penetrate to the depths of the soul, pouring in light and love by which they will be more intimately united to God, and their prayer will then be contemplative, strictly speaking, and mystical, as Saudreau has well pointed out."

Who are the souls who do not advance in prayer, even though they are in the state of grace and fulfill their strict obligations?

Spiritual writers say that they are the souls who only do for God whatever is obligatory, nothing more, but neglect mortification or self-denial, continue to love useless reading, walking for the pure pleasure of it and other superfluities like tobacco-while it would be much better to give the price of it in alms to the poor. Similarly, they are those who look for the good opinion of men, who freely do their own will and even impose it on others: in short, all those who, in the absence of self-denial, are held back by a kind of chain and have not that liberty of spirit which will make them love the will of God in all things. It is not surprising that during prayer they will then remain in tepid aridity and cannot understand how much mortified souls love inti

mate prayer, and what great peace and strength they can find in conversation with God.

4. Theological prayer

Theological prayer disposes one for infused contemplation. This prayer begins in humility and religion, and afterwards proceeds from faith, hope, and charity, and ends in contemplation which arises from the gifts of understanding and wisdom found in all just people.

Theological prayer begins in an act of humility, the fundamental virtue which removes pride. Every prayer must be humble, said with a consciousness of our own inadequacy. This act of humility is side by side with an act of adoration of God, present in the Eucharist and in the soul of the just. "We have this treasure, but in vessels easily broken."

This prayer, since it is the elevation of the soul to God, proceeds from faith. We must make an act of faith, simple, profound, continuous, and as far as possible centered on the mysteries of the life of Christ or the divine perfections. Often, some words from the Gospel or the Psalms are

sufficient. This simple act of faith is now beyond the discursive stage. The soul simply says: I ***believe.***

Here already there is a certain beginning of contemplation, for the soul already sees from afar the living fountain of water leaping up into eternal life.

From this act of faith proceeds naturally an act of hope, for the soul immediately longs for this living fountain proposed te, it by faith: "As the hart panteth alter the fountains of water, so my soul paneth alter thee, O God" (Ps. 41:2). The soul hopes for God, puts its trust in God as a

benefactor, and asks His help in order to reach this living fountain. Then it says not only I believe, but I hope, I desire, I eagerly long for Thee. St. Thomas explains this very well when he says: "Through faith, the intellect sees that which we love and for which we hope."[2] It is necessary, therefore, that in the order of generation faith precede hope and charity. Similarly man loves that which he has already apprehended as good for him. Because a man hopes that he will be able to achieve some good, through somebody, he regards the person in whom he hopes as a certain good for him. From hope in somebody, therefore, man proceeds to love him. And thus in the order of generation, where acts are concerned, hope precedes charity-but the opposite is true in the order of perfection.

In this way, therefore, following an act of hope in God as benefactor, there rises an act of affective charity by which we love God as benefactor not only on account of the good things which He gives us but also for His own sake, because in Himself He is infinitely better than His gifts. Sensible affection can be present, in an inferior way, along with this affection of charity, but it is not necessary and is taken away in times of aridity and temptation, at which times, however, the act of charity can be more intense. What is necessary, therefore, is the affection which is spiritual, supernatural, deep, profound, tranquil-much more secure and fruitful than the sensible emotions. This act of charity is, for example, thus expressed: Grant, O Lord, that I do not lie when I tell You of my love; grant that it be sincere and true.

But this *affective* charity must become *effective.* We should not only say "Lord I love You," but "In all things

I wish to do Your will." In this way, the resolution is not only general but particular also, dealing with a definite inclination which must be conquered. It should be noted that the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer correspond to the three theological virtues. Our Father . . . may Thy name be sanctified, glorified (through faith), may Thy kingdom come (this is an object of hope), may Thy will be done (through affective and effective charity).

Finally, in prayer, the knowledge of faith and the love of hope and charity are united, under the inspiration of the gift of wisdom, in the simple and effective intuition of divine goodness. And thus infused contemplation begins. Just as an artist contemplates sensible nature, or a child contemplates and looks with affection at the face of its mother, so the Christian soul in prayer contemplates according to the words of the Psalmist: "Taste and sec, because the Lord is sweet." The just soul, therefore, arrives at an almost experimental knowledge of God. It lias not an immediate experience of God Himself, but it knows God almost experimentally through the filial affection which the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit has aroused in us, according to the words of St. Paul: "The Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:16). In his commentary, St. Thomas says: "He gives this testimony 'through filial affection' which He arouses in us by a special inspiration; it is an 'infused act of charity,' and with some degree of moral certainty we distinguish this filial affection from the natural act which is more or less similar and in which sentiment is present, without sufficient conformity to the will of God." "

Mental prayer ordered in this way is an elevation of the

mind to God, proceeding in the beginning from humility and religion, then from the three theological virtues, and finally in a more or less mysterious way from die gifts of wisdom and understanding.

In this prayer, therefore, knowledge and love are more and more united in that effective love of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is like the breathing of the soul, breathing in truth and grace, and breathing forth love. It is a kind of spiritual communion prolonged for half-an-hour. Discursive prayer, and then affective prayer, gradually dispose the soul for it, just as it in its turn disposes for higher contemplation, that passive recollection and passive prayer of quiet of which St. Teresa speaks in the Fourth Mansion.

This theological prayer reconciles the simplicity of ancient authors with the method, sometimes too complicated, of the modern. And it can be applied to various subjects which have to be considered, and especially to a consideration of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, as is explained by St. Teresa in *The Way of Perfection.*

In this way are understood much better the three degrees of prayer discussed by St. Thomas. He speaks of: (1) direct movement; (2) oblique movement in a spiral form, and (3) circular movement.!'

Direct movement rises from sensible things to God and considers God in the mirror of sensible things-in nature, for example, or in parables.

Oblique movement rises in the form of a spiral, just like a twisting path up a mountain-when, for example, through the joyful, sorrowful, or glorious mysteries of the Rosary the soul rises to the contemplation of God considered in the mirror of intelligible truths.

Circular movement, like the flight of an eagle or swallow in the heights of the air, has really no beginning or end, and so differs from a process of reasoning. It is a simple intuition of the goodness of God, the radiation of which is felt in the same way as an eagle, flying in a circle, feels the radiation of the suri.

Good prayer gradually transforms character and makes the soul like Christ. It understands the words: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find Test for your souls."

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1 2

1. See S.T., 2-2, q. 83, a. 1. 2. *Ibid., q.* 24, a. 9.
3. St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life,* Part II, c. 1.
4. Blessed Julian Eymard, *Meditationi I dr Eserciyi. Spirituali ai Piedi di Gesù in Sacramento, vol.* 3, pp. 82-88.
5. S.T., 2-2, q. 84, a. 2, ad 2.
6. See P. Meynard, O.P., *Traité de la T de Intérieure, vol. I, p.* 168; Saudreau, *Degrés de la T de Spirituelle, vol. I, p.* 269. 7. See St. Teresa of Jesus, *The W-'ay of Perfection,* Chapters 28 and 29.
8. St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Interior Castle,* translated by a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey, (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1948), Fourth Mansion, chapter 1, p. 52. See St. John of the Cross, T *he Living Plame of Love,* stanza three (in volume III of *The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross,* translated and edited by E. Allison Peers).
9. See Saudreau, *op. cit., vol. I, p.* 275 for a quotation from Venerable Francis Libermann on this point.
10. Saudreau, *op. cit., vol. I, p. 277.*
11. For example, see Saudreau, op. cit., vol. I, p. 291. 12. S.T., 1-2, q. 62, a. 4.
13. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Rom.* 8:16. 14. See S.T., 2-2 q. 180, a. 6.

CHAPTER 13

Eucharistic Worship and Priestly Perfection

It is usually said that the Eucharist nourishes the interior life of every Christian because it is the food of faith, hope, charity, religion, and the other virtues.

It is the food of faith, because it is, in a sense, the crown of the mysteries of faith, because it presupposes the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and therefore the mystery of the Trinity, and the mystery of the elevation of the human race to the life of grace. The Eucharist is also the pledge of eternal life. Thus a single miracle which confirms the truth of the Eucharist by that very fact confirms also all the other mysteries which are presupposed by the Eucharist.

The Eucharist nourishes hope, because hope trusts in the divine help of grace. But the Eucharist contains not only grace but the author of grace also, and so it is the greatest of all the sacraments.

The Eucharist nourishes charity, because Holy Communion unites us to Christ and increases both affective and effective charity toward God and toward our neigh 183

bor. The Eucharist is therefore the bond of charity uniting the various members of each Christian family, poor and rich, the wise and ignorant, in the same holy table. It unites ail Christian peoples. In this way, two principles are verified: good of its very nature diffuses itself; and the greater this good is, the more fully and abundantly does it diffuse itself. Several people cannot at the same time fully possess material goods. But spiritual goods can at the same time be possessed by several people. They are then even more possessed by each person, and if any one person wished to exclude others he would lose charity and simultaneously the possession of the spiritual good. We can al] at the same time, therefore, possess the same truth, the same virtue, the same Christ substantially present in the Eucharist, and the same God present obscurely in our souls.

The Eucharist nourishes religion, because the greatest act of religion is sacrifice, an act which at the same time is interna], external, and public. But the Eucharistie sacrifice is the sacramental continuation of the boundlessly rich sacrifice of the cross. Why? Because the principal priest, Christ, cannot be more united to God, or more holy, or more united to His people who form His Mystical Body, or more united to the victim, because He offers Himself. And, finally, both victim and principal offerer are of infinite value.

2. The E ucharist and priestly perfection

We may summarize the teaching of Blessed Julian Eymard under three headings: 1

A. The Priesthood and the Spirit of Christ

B. Eucharistic Worship and Priestly Perfection (a) The Four Ends of Sacrifice (b) The Eucharistie Christ, Model of Ail Virtues (c) Prayer te, the Eucharistic Heart of Christ

C. The Eucharistic Vocation

(A) **The Priesthood and the Spirit of Christ.**

A priest must offer the unbloody sacrifice of infinite value, absolve penitents, give them birth, as it were, in the life of grace, and lead them to eternal life; in particular, he must bring the Gospel te, the poor. For this, he must have purity, humility, meekness, and burning love for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. 1-le must follow the example of the Apostles who, when they ordained deacons to minister the works of mercy, said: *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry* Of *the word* (Acts 6:4). If prayer is absent, external work will be valueless. Moreover, the priest must say with St. John the Baptist: *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

To achieve this purpose, he must live in the spirit of Christ: "He who adheres to the Lord is of one spirit with him" (I Cor. 6:17). "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). But this spirit is the spirit of truth: "For this I came into the world, to give testimony of the truth" (John 18:37). "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). "You shall be witnesses of me" (Acts 1:8). This spirit is the spirit of love who manifests himself through meekness ("Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart" [Matt. 11:29]), and through zeal, even unto death ("Christ loved me and gave himself for me" [Gal. 2:20]). This spirit, therefore, is the spirit of sacrifice:

"He who loves his Father and mother more than me is not worthy of me"; "He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." But that sacrifice will reap a hundredfold reward. "To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden marina" (Apoc. 2:17).

(B) Eucharistic Worship and Priestly Perfection.

The worship of *latria* is given to God by a worthy celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, which ought to be celebrated each day with greater faith, greater hope, and greater devotion. It is given also by Eucharistic Communion, and even by visiting the Blessed Sacrament, in an adoration of reparation, supplication, and thanksgiving.

On earth there is no other worship which is greater, holier, more liturgical, or any worship in which are better exercised toward Christ, hidden under the species, the virtues of faith, hope, charity, religion, humility, and the corresponding virtues of the Holy Spirit-al] of which constitute priestly perfection.

Al], even those who are weak and imperfect, can and should aspire to this perfection, so that they may become true adorers of Christ present in the Eucharist. To reach a place of distinction in society-to be, for example, an advocate, doctor, professor, priest-one must work hard. But the most modest priests and simple faithful can worship God in the Eucharist. If they are truly humble they can make great progress in it, as our divine Lord said: "Corne to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Holy Communion nourishes a person's soul so that he can avoid sin, resist the temptations of the flesh and of the devil, and love God increasingly "with his

whole heart and with his whole soul, with all his strength and with his whole mind." The seven gifts and docility to the Holy Spirit are also increased with this progress in charity through communion and adoration.

Two things in particular should be considered, (a) The four ends of sacrifice, and (b) the virtues of which Jesus gives us an example in the Blessed Eucharist.

(a) T *he Four End s o f Sacrifice.*

The first end of sacrifice *is adoration.* Holocaust is directed to adoration as the principal object of sacrifice. Men often forget to adore God: they adore their bodies, riches, progress in knowledge, reason or themselves. And so we have society-worship, state-worship, and rationalism. Christ the Saviour is often abandoned by men, not only by unbelievers or those who are indifferent but even by ungrateful believers, sometimes even by His own ministers who seem to love Him not as sons, but as mercenaries, because of some reward; they seem to love Him not for His own sake but for themselves. Their adoration does not spring from charity-because there is so little chariry.

In some parishes, Christ, present in the Eucharist, is alone almost for the entire week, whereas He could be a daily source of grace. At times none of the faithful come to Mass except on Sunday, and there is never a visit made to the Blessed Sacrament. This reveals not only small charity but small faith and hope also, because these virtues are normally manifested in the virtue of religion which they command.

A doration of Christ the Saviour, present in the Eucharist, is therefore very much to be commended. In itself,

this adoration repairs many ingratitudes, great indifference and lack of care for our salvation.

The second end of the sacrifice of the Eucharist is *thank sgiving* for all the favors which God has given us, for creation and the elevation of the human race to the order of grace and glory, for the redemptive Incarnation, for the institution of the Blessed Eucharist itself, and for al] the graces which flow from it, for the unnumbered Masses and Communions which for a thousand years have strengthened souls.

Many men, never thinking of these benefits, are supremely ungrateful. Since the gift is so valuable and universal, the ingratitude for it is all the greater. Normally children show some gratitude to their parents, and yet many men show no gratitude to God, the source of all good things.

Because this ingratitude is collective, and not individual only, the thanksgiving also should be collective and public. This is the second end of the Eucharist, and the one from which it has taken its name. The Eucharist brings to our mind all the very great benefits which God has given to us, and which are presupposed by the Eucharist-the Incarnation and the Redemption-and it continually applies to our souls the blessings of the Redemption. As St. John Fisher, the English martyr, used to say: The Mass is like a spiritual sun which warms us and illuminates us every day. These new gifts of the Mass and Holy Communion call for a new expression of thanks. The essential purpose of the worship of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is to thank God for the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. This institution clearly demands a special expression of thanks.

The phrase "Eucharistic Heart of Jesus" signifies particularly the Heart of Jesus, who has given us the Blessed Eucharist and each day gives it to us again.

The third end of sacrifice is *reparation* for sins committed against God and particularly for those sacrileges carried out under the inspiration of the devil. Only God knows the monstrosity of certain sacrileges almost equal to that of Judas. To atone for these abominations, the Mass should be worthily celebrated and the Eucharist should be adored in public.

In this way, the external glory which is denied to God and to Christ by these sins is restored. This reparation gives Christ that accidental joy which many deny Him. And it reminds us of what St. Veronica did during the passion when she wiped the face of the Lord with the handkerchief in which remained the image of Christ.

This public reparation, therefore, will prevent great public castigations by God which the world, because of its sin, deserves. At the saine time we ask mercy for sinners that they may return to the way of salvation and to penitence. Among those who perfectly understand this purpose of sacrifice, some offer themselves as victims and they particularly help to remove the terrible castigations of God. We read in the Canticle of Tobias (13:5): "He has chastised us for our iniquities, and he will save us for his own mercy." Reparation through Eucharistic worship obtains this mercy. In this worship is continued the reparation offered on the sacrifice of the cross.

The fourth end of sacrifice is *supplication,* to obtain the divine help and those graces necessary for salvationin particular the grace of final perseverance, something

wholly unmerited, but a pure gift which can be obtained through the prayer of petition and especially through the supreme prayer contained in the oblation of the Sacrifice of the Mass. There we have a continuation of "the intercession of Christ who lives always to intercede for us." And we ought to unite ourselves with His intercession, just as we unite ourselves with His adoration, reparation, and thanksgiving. In this way, the value of our actions will be considerably increased.

Christ's intercession in the Blessed Eucharist continues even after Mass has ended. We must join wholeheartedly our Saviour's prayer by praying for ourselves, for the Church, for her pastors, for peace, for the conversion of sinners and unbelievers, and for the salvation of all men.

Among those who have a Finn grasp of this end of sacrifice some are of the more contemplative kind, Mary Magdalens at the feed of the Saviour; others are consumed with a fiery and zealous love, like St. Paul; others resemble our Lady in the supper room after the Ascension of lier Son, persevering in prayer and asking God's help for the Church.

The consideration we have just made of the four ends of sacrifice serves a practical purpose. By it we see that adoration involves contemplating God in eternity; thanksgiving, a glance to the past and heartfelt gratitude for benefits received; reparation, sorrow for the sins we have committed and a resolution to make amends; petition and supplication, an eye to the future by asking God's help.

Eucharistie worship, so conceived, unites us intimately to Christ the priest, to His infinitely redemptive adoration, to His intercession, and to His thanksgiving.

(b) *The Eucharist Christ, Model of All Virtues.* Here we must first note a few facts of theology. Christ, present in the Eucharist, is Christ the King gloriously reigning in heaven, Christ

who is no longer in this world, who suffers not nor increases merit, Christ who yet exercises those virtues that will remain in heaven. The Eucharistie Christ adores, intercedes for us, makes thanksgiving and reparation; He realizes what is being done on earth and is conscious, therefore, of the Eucharistie worship which gives Him external glory and of all the sacrileges which rob Him of His due.

We must remember, with St. Thomas,'* that neither faith nor hope remain in heaven. The Beatific Vision takes the place of faith, and the possession of God, a possession never to be lost, that of hope. Charity, however, remains, and with it all the moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In short, the formal nature or proper ordering of the moral virtues endures; the material element disappears: "there will no longer be any place for concupiscence, or the pleasures of food, or those of sex; nor shall there be fear or daring in the face of dangers of death, nor shall there be that distribution and communication of things which we have in this life." 3

Against this background we may easily understand what Blessed Julian Eymard says when he distinguishes what is strictly true and what is metaphorically true. In the Eucharist, strictly speaking, Jesus no longer has an external life; He no longer visits those who are sick; He no longer preaches. He remains in the tabernacle "as a prisoner of love," of His own will, and He does not sec with bodilv eyes those things surrounding the Eucharist. But 1 -le knows

all these things in a most perfect way in heaven because of His infused knowledge and the Beatific Vision. In the Eucharist, Christ has a great and perfect interior life; He teaches us solitude, silence, recollection. Christ wishes to give us an example of many virtues: of charity toward His Father and our neighbor; of religion, for He is always adoring His Father, giving thanks to Him and interceding for us; of humility and obedience, for He is perfectly subject to the will of His Father; of meekness, for He is completely free from anger and hate.

The interior life of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist is, as $lessed Julian Eymard emphasizes, a life of love, love for His Father to whom He continually offers His actions. His sacramental state, His passion, now a thing of the past, but daily remembered in the Mass. His life is one of love for all men, as He wills their salvation. His heart is the center of all hearts.

The Blessed Virgin Mary had this Eucharistie devotion in an excellent degree. Her heart was drawn to the Tabernacle as iron to a magnet. Because some saints had the miraculous privilege of preserving uncorrupted in themselves until their next communion the sacramental species, we should not deny this privilege to our Eady.

With these as his principles Blessed Julian Eymard rightly speaks of Eucharistie humility, Eucharistie poverty, Eucharistie faith, Eucharistie charity. He says: "In the Eucharist the divinity, glory, power and even the humanity of Christ are hidden; Jesus is in a very poor state. He works continually for the sanctification of souls, but silently and mysteriously. . . . The soul intimately united to Christ present in the Eucharist has an intense interior life of

but remains externally poor, meek, humble. Interiorly he sometimes rejoices, but he does not show his joy externally. His life is hidden with Christ in God.. . . The virtues of his soul must be sublime and perfect and their form simple and ordinary; in short, their perfection should be like the glow under the ashes.'" The heart of Christ is, therefore, a burning furnace of charity hidden quietly under the sacramental species.

In addition to humility, Christ, present in the Eucharist, exercises a charity that is consoling, patient, kind. It consoles, in particular, the poor and the afflicted; it is patient in waiting for us; it is kind toward all. It helps all, even the most wretched and most violent enemies of Christ, back to God. Jesus remains in the Eucharist even as a Victim of love, ofFered in an unbloody way in the Mass. In this way He draws many faithful souls to a life of reparation.

(c) *Prayer to the E ucharistic H eart o* f Jesus.

AU these thoughts are beautifully expressed in the litanies of the Eucharistie Heart of Jesus, litanies resembling ladders, beginning with the state of humiliation in which Christ lives in the

Eucharist and ending with that deep and intimate union with God to which generous souls are called.

The following prayer is particularly suitable for adoring the Blessed Sacrament:

Eucharistie Heart of Jesus, loving companion of our exile, I adore you.
Eucharistie Heart of Jesus,

Solitary Heart, humiliated Heart, abandoned Heart, Forgotten Heart, despised Heart, outraged Heart. Heart, repudiated by men,
Heart, the lover of our hearts. Heart, seeking to be loved, Heart,
patiently waiting for us, Heart, ready to hear us,
Heart, wishing to be asked favors, Heart, eternal source of graces, Silent Heart, wishing to speak to seuls, Heart, consoling refuge of the hidden life, Heart, master of the secrets of union with God, Heart of I lim who sleeps but is always awake, Eucharistie Heart of lesus, have pity on us. Jesus, Victim, I wish to console you,
I unite myself to you, I immolate myself with you, I annihilate myself before you,
I wish to forget myself in order to think of you, To be forgotten and despised, for love of you, To be understood and loved by you alone.
I will be silent in order to listen to you and I will leave myself to love myself in you.
Grant that in this way I may ease your thirst for my salvation, your burning thirst for my sanctification, and that, purified, I may love you purely and truly.
I do not wish to weary you any more by having you wait for me; take me, I give myself to you.
I give over to you al] my work: my soul, that you may illuminate it; my heart, that you may direct it; my will, that you may fix it; my misery, that you may help it; my soul and my body, that you may nourish them.

Eucharistie Heart of my Jesus, whose blood is the life of my seul, grant that I may no longer live, but that you may live alone in me. Amen.

(200 days' indulgence for each recitation, Leo XIII, Feb. 6, 1899)

(C) **The Eucharistic Vocation.**

From Christ, really present in the Blessed Eucharist, come actual efficacious graces which perfect the seul. After His resurrection, Christ said to Peter, in order to have him make amends for his denial : "'Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?' He said to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!"' (John 21:16). Then Christ said to him: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep," and foretold his marryrdom. This prophecy was made at the same time as He gave the grace of enduring martyrdom te, Peter. Christ, present in the Eucharist, has a similar influence, but in a hidden way, an influence which inspires efficacious and persevering love.

Faith is often proved by trials. Blessed Julian Eymard, for example, was looking for vocations. None came, and the one boy with him had gone away. When Blessed Julian noted this, he remained before the Blessed Sacrament and said: "Lord, I will remain here on my knees until my son returns." Three or four hours later he returned. Many excellent boys then came to him, so that his Congregation flourished not only in France, Italy, and other parts of Europe, but even in North and Central America. It is by testing faith that a seul is led to perfection. Who are particularly called to sanctity in this way?

They are those who have received a Eucharistie voca-

tion. Jesus says: "Nobody comes to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him" (John 6:44). The Father draws all to sanctity, but not always in the saine way. All Christians, priests in particular, are called indeed to Eucharistic worship, but from among them some are specially called.

What, according to Blessed Julian Eymard, is a Eucharistic vocation?

It is a calling through a special grace, gentle and strong at the same time, as if the Lord were to say: "Corne to My sanctuary." If there is no resistance, this attraction gradually gains dominance.

If one answers this call faithfully, he finds peace, he finds his ideal home, one made specially for him, and his own spiritual food: "I have found the place of my rest." Books, spiritual direction, are no longer of sufficient help, and he needs profound prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Finally, this attraction of grace leads a person to give himself completely to the service of the Eucharist so that he may be a true adorer of Jesus Christ present in the Sacrament. And he does this not only that he may be saved, that he may acquire virtue; he does it not only to save souls but to answer the invitation of the Saviour: "True adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore him" (John 4:23).

What St. Thomas, with other writers, called divine contemplation is included in this idea of adoration, because this contemplation proceeds from living faith illuminated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it imperates the virtue of religion, whose highest act is sacrifice, in particular, the sacrifice of adoration.

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Eucharistic worship, therefore, profoundly conceived, leads to a true priestly perfection by which the priest, under the continual influence of the Eucharistic Christ, becomes in truth another Christ.

Many, by walking along this road, have in fact become saints. We, therefore, must humbly and confidently look to the saine goal, daily asking special and efficacious grace for this purpose, so that we may give more glory to God and save more souls.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1 3

1. Sec Blessed Julian Eymard, *Meditazioni Ver Esercizi Spirituali ai Piedi di Gescc in Sacramento, vol. 3.*
2. Sec S.T., 1-2, q. 67. *3. Ibid,* a. 1.
4. Blessed Julian Eymard, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

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